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Holiday plays:

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HOLIDAY PLAYS

FOR
HOME, SCHOOL AND
SETTLEMENT

BY
VIRGINIA OLCOTT

DESIGNS FOR COSTUMES BY
HARRIET MEAD OLCOTT

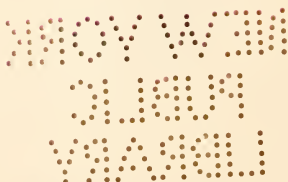
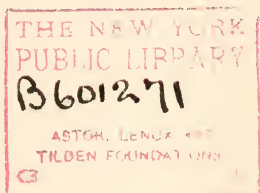
ILLUSTRATED IN COLOR AND IN LINE



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1925

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RAHWAY NEW JERSEY





FOREWORD

The Holiday Plays contained in this volume were written for the boys and girls of my own clubs, and I trust may be useful in homes, schools and settlements. The plays are short and simple in language, requiring few rehearsals, and little stage setting and few properties.

The story accompanying each drama is to be either read or told to the cast, for it is my experience that young people are more interested in the play if it has been preceded by the story. I have written all these stories as far as possible in the form in which I have told them successfully to my own groups.

The story-telling program which serves as an introduction to the audience has also proved most popular.

The costumes have been carefully considered and pains have been taken that they should be simple in design, harmonious in color and appropriate in historic value, as well as easy for the busy teacher to make with little effort.

A list of cheap materials which may be used very effectively on the amateur stage is added.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR INEXPENSIVE MATERIAL FOR COSTUMES

SUBSTITUTE:

Cambric for silk.

Flowered cretonne and cheap crêpe for brocade.

Cotton-flannel for velvet.

Muslin for linen.

White cotton batting with bits of black unglazed cambric pasted on it, for ermine.

USE:

Cheese-cloth for Fairy costumes and Grecian robes —
Cotton crêpe for the heavier ones.

Cambric with glazed sides turned in for Puritan dress.

Cotton khaki or denim for Indian costumes.

Cheap serge or cotton-flannel for Peasant dress.

Flowered cretonne for Colonial gowns.

FOR TRIMMING USE:

Artificial flowers, beads, rhinestones, gold and silver
paper, Christmas decorations, cotton, crêpe paper.

FAIRY WINGS MAY BE MADE OF:

Light weight cardboard, painted.

Heavy wrapping paper, painted.

Tarlatan or stiffening made over wire frame.

THE CAVE OF THE FATES

CHARACTERS

MAID MARGARET.

DAME ANNA.

FIRST FATE.

SECOND FATE.

THIRD FATE.

LITTLE NEW YEAR.

COSTUMES

THREE FATES: First Sister in Greek robes of white. Second Sister in robes of shaded gray and lavender. Third Sister in black draperies, a gray black veil hides her face.

DAME ANNA: Gray peasant dress — white apron, kerchief, and high white coif. Red stockings.

MAID MARGARET: Short dull red skirt, white chemisette. Blue over-jacket, laced loosely in front. Blue wool stockings. White apron and coif.

In Act II she wears a hooded cape and carries a staff and lantern.

LITTLE NEW YEAR: Short white slip. Long white stockings. He is covered with bells and spangles. Bits of frosted cotton lie like snowflakes on his hair. Tiny bells fastened with thread are attached to his hair.

PROGRAM
THE CAVE OF THE FATES

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

MAID MARGARET
journeys to the Cave of the Fates and begs
the gift of life for her brother because—

DAME ANNA
her old and feeble Grandmother, is grieving
for his loss, and the story tells how, touched
by her loving faithful heart

THE THREE FATES
grant her prayer and with the

LITTLE NEW YEAR
Maid Margaret returns to her cottage
home.

THE STORY OF
THE CAVE OF THE FATES

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

Across the seas, centuries ago, people believed that there were three Sisters who ruled the world — the first was a young fair maiden who spun the Thread of Human Life upon her world-aged Spinning Wheel; the second was a beautiful woman who twisted the Thread between her thumb and finger, making it weak or strong, giving sickness or health, happiness or woe to mankind; and the third was an old, old woman who sat and with her great shears cut short the Thread of Life and brought Death to the world. They called them the Three Fates.

Now it happened on one New Year's Eve that Maid Margaret, a little peasant girl, went searching for the Fates to ask them to give a long life to her brother. He was at war in a distant land and her aged grandmother's heart was breaking, mourning for his return.

The journey was long and hard, for the Cave

6 THE CAVE OF THE FATES

of the Fates was at the very edge of the world and the child's little feet were bruised and torn by the brambles and her garments were in tatters. Timidly she crept through the deep passageways until she reached the cavern chamber where the Fates lived.

All was dark — save for the dim light of a faggot fire which burned close to the silent figures; the first Sister was busily spinning. The child thought she had never seen any one so wonderfully beautiful! Her long golden hair fell on her white robe and her smile was like a sunbeam. The second Sister was gently turning the Thread between her thumb and finger as it fell from the Wheel. Her face was like an angel's — kind and wonderfully pitiful! And Maid Margaret thought she saw a tear fall as she gave the Thread into the waiting hands of the third Sister, — an old, old, bent woman crouching in black garments, with her aged face hidden by the flowing veil.

With her heart filled with hope and fear the child stole out of the shadows and stood before them.

“Some one is coming!” said the first Sister.

“She is here!” said the second Sister.

“It is the Child!” said the third Sister.

“It is for Grandmother!” the little girl ex-

claimed. "It was for her I came," and then with clasped hands she poured forth her whole story. Her white, tired, little face, and sweet unselfish words, touched the hearts of the Fates.

"It is for another that she prays," said the first Sister.

"Her heart is good," said the second Sister.

"Poor little one," said the third Sister.

All was still in the great cavern and Maid Margaret waited breathlessly for the answer to her prayer — then the second Sister spoke very solemnly —

"Listen," she said, "your brother may return to your cottage to-morrow, if you promise to serve us seven years!"

Maid Margaret was almost wild with joy — at last her grandmother should have her heart's desire! She would have lived with them forever if they had asked her! "Dear Fates," she cried, "tell me my work, that I may begin."

"Oil my Wheel," said the first Sister.

"Turn my Flax," said the second Sister.

"Hold my Shears," said the third Sister.

Suddenly in the dark passageway an unseen clock struck twelve times, one — two — three — four — five — six — seven — eight — nine — ten — eleven — twelve. It was New Year's! Then a thousand tiny bells began tinkling and into

the Cave danced a little fairy Sprite all white and silver, laughter and jollity. It was the little New Year! "Oh, ho!" cried he. "I've been all around the Universe in the twinkling of a second," then he bowed low before the Fates. "Have you a message, O Fates, for me to carry back to the world?" he asked.

"We have," said the first Sister.

"It is here," said the second Sister.

"It is the Child," said the third Sister, pointing to Maid Margaret.

The little New Year danced gaily over to her and took her hand to lead her away—but the Child shook her head—"You are mistaken," she said, "I am the servant," and she began busily to oil the great Spinning Wheel. She was not the message, no, indeed! She was going to live in the Cave for seven years, so as to make her dear grandmother's last days on earth happy! And she worked harder than ever.

Then there was beautiful music in the Cave and the little girl stopped a minute to listen, and behold! it was the second Fate speaking,—to her!

"You are our servant no longer, little Maid," she said. "We did but try your heart and found it good and true; go back to the World and you shall see your brother on New Year's Day."

THE CAVE OF THE FATES

ACT I

THE HOME

SCENE I: *The kitchen in the cottage of Dame Anna. At the center is an open grate with a burning log upon it. A plain high-back settle, near by, in which is seated Dame Anna. She is a bent old woman in a gray peasant dress and crossed kerchief. Her eyes are closed and her face is sad and worn. Near her is a spinning wheel and she holds, listlessly in her lap, the distaff.*

By the table Maid Margaret is busy preparing the evening meal. As the curtain rises she places the single candle in the center, and looks proudly at her work. There is an air of holiday about the simple repast — a sprig of green herb decorates each place and two little cakes are a special treat beside the daily dish of porridge.

MAID MARGARET.

(Lightly kissing the brow of the old woman.)

The sup is ready, Grandame.

DAME ANNA.

(Listlessly, without moving.)

'Tis weary I am, little one, eat you alone, and leave me to my dreams.

MAID MARGARET.

Alack, are they come again, those evil thoughts? So happy we have been this last fortnight that I thought the charm of the Wise Woman had wrought its magic! (*Coaxing.*) See, dear Grandame, 'tis New Year's Eve and I have made holiday. Besides our porridge we have each a sweet-cake — a — real — sweet — cake! And Father Andrew gave me this morning some herbs which grew beside the blessed Church. (*Taking her hands.*) Come, come, and see!

(Dame Anna slowly goes to the table, and draws the girl to her side when she sees her pretty work.)

DAME ANNA.

(Lovingly.)

You are a good child to me, little maid, 'tis like a sunbeam you are with all your bright ways.

MAID MARGARET.

(Delighted.)

It pleases you? (*Simply.*) 'Tis these herbs



First Fate

that make all so fair; Father Andrew blessed them when he plucked them for me. And these little sweet-cakes (*holding one in each hand, proudly*), it was my birth-night pence that bought these for us!

DAME ANNA.

You must rule more wisely that kind little heart. Some day you will need all the pence that our humble home can spare. Soon you may be left alone with none to look to your comfort.

MAID MARGARET.

(*Anxiously.*)

Alack, 'tis sick you are that you talk so wild! Dear Grandame, tell me what it is that ails you?

DAME ANNA.

(*Soothingly.*)

'Tis no ailment, but my dreams this night have told me that my days are fast ending. 'Tis glad I am, for I am weary of waiting for this long war to be over.

MAID MARGARET.

(*With passion.*)

Your dreams are false! False and bitter, Grandame! 'Tis a New Year promise, and he is coming to us!

DAME ANNA.

(Sighing and going back to the fire.)

No, little one, he will never return. Slain on the field of battle, mayhap he lies. I have lost my grandson and you your brother! 'Tis his fate that took him from us.

MAID MARGARET.

(Resolutely.)

I believe it not!

DAME ANNA.

'Tis the courage of youth you have. 'Tis a wondrous gift — the Fates are kind as well as pitiless.

MAID MARGARET.

(With hope.)

And 'tis a kind Fate that will bring him to us.

DAME ANNA.

(Solemnly.)

Naught can change the Fates that come to us. From our birth-night they sit and make our destiny. No human skill or wisdom can change their will.

(She sits listlessly before the fire, and gazes into the flames, with Maid Margaret on the little stool)

at her feet. Her looks are thoughtful and grave. The room is still. Slowly Dame Anna closes her eyes, and falls into a light sleep.)

MAID MARGARET.

(Softly.)

Grandame! *(Gently touching her hand.)*
 Asleep she is! May her dreams be kind to her
 this New Year's Eve! *(Wearily.)* 'Tis hard
 to be young with a sorrow on the heart, but alack!
 'tis harder to be aged and in grief! *(Sweetly.)*
 Though I love him much, dear Bertram, 'tis for
her sake mostly that I wish him home again.
(Pause. She speaks resolutely.) He must come
 or she will die of grieving. Alack, what shall I
 do, a simple maid without strength or wisdom?
(She stands, her voice is low but firm.) I will —
 go — to — the Fates — and tell them — about
 Grandame. 'Tis only they who can bring him
 back. They will listen, for they are good.

*(She turns to the hearth and takes her brown-
 hooded cloak from the peg. Then crossing to the
 table, she picks up a sprig of green herb and
 hides it in her bodice. She speaks softly.)*

I know not which path to take. Maybe these
 dear leaves will lead me across the marshlands to
 their dwelling, for blessed they were by Father
 Andrew, and they can do naught but good.

(She pauses by the open door and gazes tenderly at Dame Anna.) Good even, dear Grandame! But a little time I shall be away. The Fates will give you joy this New Year's Day!

CURTAIN

ACT II

THE CAVE

SCENE II: *The Cave of the Fates. As the curtain rises all is still. The Cave is lighted only by a faggot fire, which burns near the figures of the Three Fates, who sit silent in the center-back of the Cave. All is gloom elsewhere. Quietly the Fates do their tasks. The First Fate happily spins the Thread of Human Life. The Second Fate tests it between her thumb and finger, making it strong or weak, giving weal or woe. The Third Fate, with her huge scissors, cuts the Thread and ends the course of Life.*

FIRST FATE.

(Brightly singing.)

Thread of Life —
Twirl, Thread, twirl,
No wish, no will,
Enter the World.

SECOND FATE.

(Tenderly singing.)

Thread of Life —

Future years —
Bloom and fade,
Smiles and tears.

THIRD FATE.

(Mournfully singing.)

Thread of Life,
Fall, Thread, fall!
Rest at last
Silence all.

FIRST FATE.

(Without pausing in her work.)

Sister, a child is born. This is the New Year;
I pray you make her gift of life a happy one.

SECOND FATE.

(Softly taking the Thread in her fingers.)

Thread of Life,
Beautiful be,
Smiles, Joys,
Ever with thee.

(Holding the Thread to the Third Fate, who puts it by.)

THIRD FATE.

I will not work to-night. The coming year
must bring happiness to all.

FIRST FATE.

Listen, there is some one groping in the dark passage.

SECOND FATE.

Throw on some faggots, Sister, and give more light.

THIRD FATE.

'Tis a long, hard road for a child's feet to travel.

(Enter Maid Margaret. She carries a lantern and a pilgrim's staff. Her cloak is torn and her face is white and spent.)

MAID MARGARET.

(Curtseying timidly.)

I have come a weary way. The paths were rough and filled with brambles. I pray you pardon my ill attire. *(Holds out her tattered cloak.)*

FIRST FATE.

Come hither, that I may look on you. It was not many years ago since your Thread of Life was spun on yonder Wheel. *(Maid Margaret crosses and kneels before her with her hood unclasped.)* Let me look close and see what my Sister has done to you.



Maid Margaret

SECOND FATE.

(Very gently.)

I have dealt kindly with her. There have been both smiles and shadows in her life.

FIRST FATE.

But alack! The smiles lie far back and now a dark shadow is in her eyes! *(To Maid Margaret.)* Tell me, Child, what is your sorrow?

MAID MARGARET.

(Breathless.)

'Tis Grandame — *(The Fates watch her intently)* and — I — came — to ask — you — to help — her.

THIRD FATE.

(Speaking for the first time.)

What is her age?

MAID MARGARET.

(Turning to her in happiness.)

You will help? *(Quickly.)* Listen, I will tell you.

SECOND FATE.

(Taking her hand and drawing her away.)

Seek not my Sister's aid — her gentle hand brings death — alone — *(Maid Margaret shrinks*

away in terror.) No, fear not. *That* is happiness to some. Tell *me* your story.

MAID MARGARET.

(Very simply.)

'Tis for Grandame that I came. My brother is gone to the war — for three long years he has been away — and her heart is sad longing for him. 'Tis all she has, just Bertram and me! But now he is gone and she fears him slain in the battles. Ah, dear Fates, bring him back to her.

SECOND FATE.

(Regretfully.)

I do not often change one's destiny. It is valiant to die on the field of battle. The cottager's grandson deserves such honor. *(To the First Fate.)* That was my decree twenty years ago when you gave his Thread of Life into my hands. *(To Maid Margaret.)* Ask me not to change his destiny, my child.

MAID MARGARET.

(In despair.)

But she will die, dear Grandame, if he come not back. *(Beseechingly.)* Oh, Fates, be generous, give her back her grandson!

FIRST FATE.

(To the others.)

The child does not ask to have her own life changed; 'tis for another that she begs.

SECOND FATE.

(Thoughtfully — aside.)

It must have been of pure gold that you spun her Life Thread. Strong and good must be her heart. Shall I try her, Sister?

FIRST FATE.

Whatever you ask of her, she will be ready for the task. She will not be found wanting, I know —

SECOND FATE.

(Turning and touching the bowed head.)

Gold could not change his fate, nor wisdom, nor deeds of bravery — but — your grief and thought for another than yourself have turned my will. Listen well — your brother may return to your cottage if you will serve us seven years.

MAID MARGARET.

(Springing up joyfully.)

Gladly I will serve you forever! Give me my work, kind Fate, that I may begin.

FIRST FATE.

Oil my Wheel.

SECOND FATE.

Turn my Flax.

THIRD FATE.

Hold my Shears.

MAID MARGARET.

(Dropping her cloak to the ground in her haste.)

Such easy tasks! *(Kneeling by the Wheel.)*
Dear Wheel, you will glisten like the sunshine
when my work is done!

FIRST FATE.

Wait! If you stay with us for seven years you
can never see your Grandame again.

MAID MARGARET.

(Simply, with cheer.)

If I stay with you, Grandame will have her
heart's desire.

SECOND FATE.

Wait! If you stay with us seven years you
must lose your friends and playmates.

MAID MARGARET.

(Bravely.)

You are my friends, I shall want no others. No work will be too hard, nor the years too long to show my gratitude.

SECOND FATE.

(To the others.)

I spoke the truth. Her heart is strong and pure. She has been tried and has not failed. The world needs her. It would be wrong to keep her with us even for seven years. *(In the distance a bell strikes twelve times.)*

FIRST FATE.

(Brightly.)

The New Year is born. Listen! Hear him dancing through the passage.

(Suddenly into the gloom comes dancing the little New Year. He is robed in sparkling white, and covered with tinkling bells. All his movements are light and airy and his voice is filled with laughter.)

NEW YEAR.

Here I am! All over the universe I have been in the twinkling of a second. Is there a message, O Destinies, to carry back to the world?



Little New Year

FIRST FATE.

There *is* a message.

SECOND FATE.

It is before you.

THIRD FATE.

It is the Child!

NEW YEAR.

(Running brightly to Maid Margaret.)

This is a fair message to take to some waiting home. *(Takes her hand.)* Come, beautiful gift, let the New Year take you to the World.

MAID MARGARET.

(Drawing back timidly.)

You are mistaken, I — am — not — the message. I — am their — servant!

SECOND FATE.

Servant no longer, little maid, we did but try your heart, and found it brave and good. Go with our messenger and find your happiness on New Year's Day.

(The Fates begin their work once more, as the little New Year leads Maid Margaret from the Cave.)

CURTAIN

GRANDMOTHER CUPID

CHARACTERS

BETTY.

RICHARD.

MISTRESS FAIRFAX.

COSTUMES

MISTRESS BETTY: Underskirt of pale pink — overskirt white with pink roses. Black velvet ribbon around throat. High heeled slippers with buckles — white stockings.

In Act II she wears a long cape.

MISTRESS FAIRFAX: Same style dress as Betty's. Her underskirt is dark gray — and the overskirt flowered lavender. She wears a white fichu and a white lawn colonial house cap.

RICHARD: Dark blue colonial coat, tight fitting blue trousers. Black shoes and stockings.

PROGRAM
GRANDMOTHER CUPID

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

BETTY
and

RICHARD
forgetting the day of their happy betrothal,
vow that they will see each other no more!
But on St. Valentine's Day

MISTRESS FAIRFAX
with the help of Cupid as her messenger,
brings happiness again to those wilful chil-
dren.

THE STORY OF
GRANDMOTHER CUPID

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

Betty and Richard lived over a hundred years ago. They were not brother and sister, but they were dear, loving friends, who had quarreled just as some wilful young people do to-day. They might never have been happy again but for a dear old grandmother, who thought and planned for them, just as grandmothers do all the world over.

It was St. Valentine's Day and poor little Betty sat heart-broken in her room alone, while Richard stormed moodily in his lonely Hall. Both of them were angry and hurt, for each felt the other had been wrong and both were too proud to be the first to ask forgiveness.

And this is what Betty's grandmother did!

"It is St. Valentine's Day," said the clever old lady, "and it's time for those children to be happy again. I will send them each a Valentine message and they need never know who helped Cupid!" And so she did.

When Mistress Betty received the Valentine she grew tearful and happy and, covering her thin gown with a long cape, she hastened to the old oak tree to meet Richard, as the note had asked.

When Richard received his Valentine, his heart grew light once more and, folding his Betty's note upon his breast, he hurried to the meeting place beneath the oak tree, as she bade him.— And . . . there is nothing more to say.

But the dear old grandmother never told her secret of who played Cupid!

GRANDMOTHER CUPID

ACT I

THE QUARREL

SCENE: *Betty's room. Richard's room. The stage is divided in the center by a curtain reaching from the back to the front, making two separate rooms.*

On the left is Betty's room, furnished in delicately colored chintz, a glimmering fire on the andiron. On the shelf above are tall candlesticks. In a conspicuous place is a silhouette portrait of a young officer. As the curtain rises Betty is seen sitting despondently in a large arm-chair near the hearth.

At the right of the division is Richard's room. A plainly furnished room with the window hung with heavy dark curtains. An oak table is at the right, on which stands a punch bowl. There is a fire-place with glowing embers, with a girl's silhouette plainly in view on the mantel above. Richard is seated in a high-backed chair near the hearth as the curtain rises. He gazes fixedly into the fire in an attitude of hopelessness. He holds

his position of misery all the time that Betty is speaking.

MISTRESS BETTY.

I care not what happens now. It is all over and I can never be happy again. (*She stands gazing into the fire.*) Alack! how did it come about? A few hasty words, which I meant not, and he is gone forever! (*With some temper.*) Yes, but why did he doubt me? Is it such a sin to even smile on a lad? 'Tis all I did, and behold he is in such a hot temper, forsooth! (*Gazing on the silhouette.*) Listen, Richard Talbot! I am no weak maid, to mind your every whim, and I shall dance and be gay with any lad I choose! Why do you look so grave? I like it not! Your face is sour and stern. (*Brokenly.*) Yes! but that is the face I love and can never see again. (*Sadly.*) Why didn't he trust me? I have been faithful always. (*Taking the picture and speaking very earnestly.*) I will never forgive you, never! (*Throwing the picture into the flames, she sinks into the arm-chair and remains motionless, as Richard Talbot speaks.*)

RICHARD.

(*Rising and leaning against the mantel.*)

'Tis over! After all these years to find her faithless! Was not my love enough, that she

must go a-smiling and giving favors to all the lads? (*Bitterly.*) With the banns fixed for a week hence, 'twas time for more serious thoughts and maidenly behavior! (*Sternly.*) I can take no fly-about for my wife! (*He leans on the mantel and gazes on the silhouette.*) Oh, Betty! Betty! Why isn't your heart as sweet and true as your face? I can never forgive you! never! never! (*He takes the picture and casts it into the flames as the curtain falls.*)

ACT II

ITS CURE

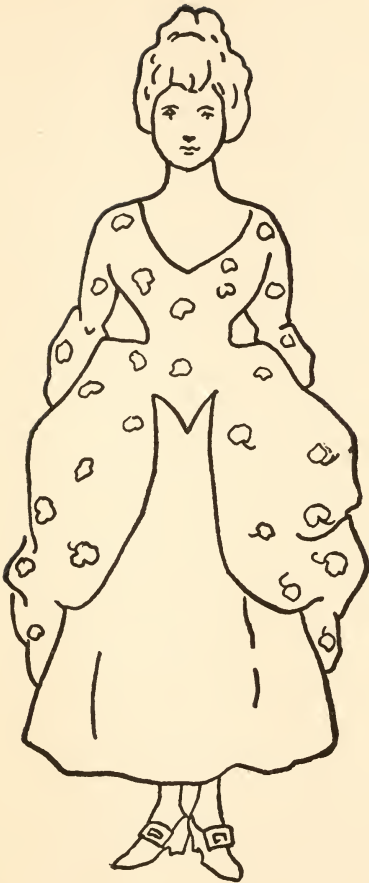
SCENE: *Betty's room. The trysting place. The stage is still divided. To the left is Betty's room. Richard's room is changed, and that division represents a woodland with background of oak and underbrush covered with snow. The grove is empty.*

As the curtain rises Mistress Fairfax sits alone in a big arm-chair.—Her face is sweet, yet anxious.—She speaks softly.

MISTRESS FAIRFAX.

(Musingly.)

How wilful the young people are! They used not to be so in my days. I know not what to make of them. Maids used to be more prudent and the lads more kind when I was young. *(Sadly.)* Poor little Betty, it makes my heart ache to see her pale face and quiet ways. She used to be the light and laughter of our house. She has a good, loving heart, though she is wilful, and Richard should be more patient. *(She stands by the hearth.)* I



Betty

wonder where his picture is? She has thrown it away, perhaps. Alack, I fear the wound is past healing. She told me she would never forgive him. (*Pause.*) And Richard, poor lad, he loves her truly. Betty should be more careful of a man's jealous heart. (*A pause of a moment. Mistress Fairfax seats herself by the table and listlessly knits.*) Ah, there is enough sorrow in the coming years! The young people should be happy always. (*With determination.*) I must help those children! A lovers' quarrel so easily made will be easily mended. But — what shall I do when they say that they will not see one another again? (*Thinking deeply, she crosses to the window and gazes out.*) How fast the snow falls! Yet how soft and white! Each flake looks like a feather from a bird's wing or — from Sir Cupid's wing! For this is St. Valentine's Day! Ah, my poor little Betty, there will be no message or trysting hour for her! (*Suddenly.*) Faith! 'tis a grand thought I have! 'Tis Cupid's own work that will bring those foolish ones together. But I must make haste ere it grows late. (*Crossing quickly to the table, she writes hastily with the quill pen, and then softly reads aloud.*)

“ My dear one, meet me to-night by the oak tree in the grove. Your Richard.” (*She folds and*

seals the note, smiling.) Indeed, my lad, 'tis *you* yourself, who should be writing those words but for your stubborn pride! Ah! there is always work for us old ones! (*Addressing the note.*) To Mistress — Betty — Fairfax — The Manor House.— There, little Betty! How your eyes will glisten when they see that! And Richard, too — how glad will be his heart with my next note — (*She again writes and, standing, slowly reads it aloud.*) “Dear Lad, meet me to-night by the old oak tree; I have forgiven you. Your Betty.” (*Addressing.*) To Sir Richard Talbot, Elridge Hall.— 'Tis finished! I will bid a messenger deliver them this very hour — and by night those dear foolish ones will be happy once more! (*She leaves the room for an instant, then returns to the arm-chair by the hearth. She speaks brightly, as she settles herself comfortably before the fire.*) The children need never know who wrote those messages. 'Twas my hand that spoke what their hearts felt — I will rest here for a space until they come to me and tell me of their happiness.— (*Sitting before the grate fire she softly falls asleep. There is a pause of a few moments, as Betty steals into the grove in the right division. Her light house gown is covered by a heavy cape — her face is alight with joy.*)

MISTRESS BETTY.

'Tis near the hour for him to come! I can scarce wait to tell him that my anger is all fled —
(She shyly takes the note from beneath her bodice and reads it.) “My dear one, meet me to-night by the oak tree in the grove. Your Richard.”
(Tenderly.) Dear lad, to think that he should lay down his pride and write those words to me!
(A rustling is heard in the woods, then Richard enters and hurries toward her.)

RICHARD.

My Betty!

MISTRESS BETTY.

(Tenderly gazing on him.)

I am sorry —

RICHARD.

(Hurriedly interrupting.)

Yes — I know — your words were sweet! I wear them near my heart. *(Half ashamed.)*
 'Tis your forgiveness I want too, Betty.

MISTRESS BETTY.

(Sweetly.)

There is naught to forgive. *(Wistfully.)*
 Ah, Richard, how sad these long weeks have been. My heart was nearly broken when no word came



Richard

from you — and to-day — I thought that there never would be any more joy for me.— That is what I told Grandmother.— Listen! I threw away your picture — and I told Grandmother I would never, never, see you again — oh! I was wicked.

RICHARD.

(With arm about her.)

Hush! you were good always. We both must learn to be more patient and thoughtful. *(Gaily.)* Let us be grateful that St. Valentine was about to carry messages to-day.

MISTRESS BETTY.

(Joyfully.)

Come, let us go to Grandmother. Grieving she was this morn over our quarrel.— Let us surprise her and tell her of our happiness.

(Hand in hand they leave the grove, as the curtain falls.)

AN APRIL FOOL!

CHARACTERS

JACK.

MOTHER.

PETER FOOL.

JENNY FOOL.

JOLLY FOOL.

SIMON FOOL.

BABY FOOL.

And as many other little Fools as are desired.

COSTUMES

JACK: Blue pajamas.

MOTHER: Night-dress — Boudoir cap.

PETER FOOL: Square black and white checked coat, white ruff at neck and ankle. Long trousers.

JENNY FOOL and the BABY: Short full white skirt — pink frills, pink stockings, high heeled slippers. Tall pink hat.

Baby wears a one piece Fool's suit of blue — white cap and frills.

SIMON FOOL: Fool's suit of yellow with big black moons.

JOLLY FOOL: Striped Fool's suit of red and green — Red and green cap — with bells.

PROGRAM
AN APRIL FOOL!

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

It is the eve before the first day of April
and the Fools are planning how they can
punish

JACK

They are angry with him because every year
he makes of them such foolish funny April
Fools. So

PETER FOOL

and

JENNY FOOL

and

JOLLY FOOL

and

SIMON FOOL

and the little crying

BABY FOOL

catch the boy and — happily

MOTHER

comes to the rescue!

THE STORY OF
AN APRIL FOOL!

(To be told or read to the Cast)

All the Fool family were tired of being April Fools! They were Peter and Jolly Fool, Simon and Jenny Fool and the Baby. So on the very last day of March, which is the day before April the First, which is April Fools' Day, all the Fool family gathered in Jack's bedroom. They were very angry — every single one of them — because Jack made them do such silly foolish things every April Fools' Day. So they planned that they would catch him when he came to bed and make such a fool of him that he would never want to mention the first day of April again.

Then they hid under the bed — back of the door — behind the curtains! At last Jack came, already for sleep in his blue flannel pajamas. He was a jolly happy little boy, and he looked jollier and happier than ever this night. He was singing a merry little song when all the Fools crept out of their hiding places and catching hold of

him, held him tight — tight. Jack didn't look happy any longer; he looked cross and miserable.

Now listen what those Fools did! They made a-real-fool-of-Jack! They dressed him in their silly ridiculous clothes, and danced around and pranced about, making all manner of fun of the poor little boy. There he stood in a white frilled skirt with a funny black and white checked cloak, a big frill about his little neck, and the Baby's white cap tied beneath his chin. And he was so very angry that he forgot he was a boy and he began — crying!!!

I am not going to tell you any more of the story because the play will tell you just what happened next — Jack's Mother insists it was all a dream anyway!

AN APRIL FOOL

ACT I

THE FOOLS' REVOLT

SCENE: *Jack's bedroom. A plainly furnished child's room with a little white cot to the left. A window with parted chintz curtains. Near by a mantel with a tall clock which points to nine. Two or three simple chairs and a small bureau make up the furniture.*

As the curtain rises Peter Fool stands in the center of the room. His hands are in his pockets and his feet apart. He scowls.

PETER FOOL.

(Impatiently.)

It's nine o'clock! I wish the others would come. That boy goes to bed in half an hour and unless they hurry we shall never have time to decide what to do. *(He calls through the window.)*
"Simon! Simon!"

VOICE.

(In the distance.)

We are coming!

(There is a murmur of little voices on the outside which grows louder and then a number of Fools come creeping into the room. Some climb in from the windows. Others enter through the half open door.)

PETER FOOL.

(Crossly.)

Why are you so late?

SIMON FOOL.

Late! I thought we never should get here. That boy was sitting on the porch below, so we could not enter either by the door or window.

JOLLY FOOL.

Never mind! we are here now. Don't scold, Peter. *(Pointing to the Baby, who has burst into tears.)* Look at the Baby, she is crying again!

JENNY FOOL.

(Kneeling to comfort her.)

Don't cry! Peter isn't angry any longer. Listen, we are going to begin now.





Peter Fool

AN APRIL FOOL

BABY FOOL.

(Brightening.)

What — are — we-going-to-do — to the boy?

PETER FOOL.

(With determination.)

It has to be settled to-night, that is certain, for to-morrow is the first day of April.

ALL THE FOOLS.

(Mournfully.)

Yes — to-morrow is the first day of April.

SIMON FOOL.

And I don't intend to be a Fool any longer.

PETER FOOL.

Nor I. I've been a Fool ever since I was born and I am tired of it.

JENNY FOOL.

(Very wisely.)

But how are we going to stop it?

PETER FOOL.

We must stop it. *(With a shudder.)* Do you remember last year?

SIMON FOOL.

Do I? I should think so! That boy made me spend the whole day whistling back of his grandmother's chair and she thought it was the canary; I heard her say so at dinner-time. She said she was afraid that the bird had a cold because its voice was so hoarse. (*Angrily.*) The idea!!

JENNY FOOL.

(*With disgust.*)

Do you know what I did last April Fools' Day? Every time Jack's mother wanted to work he made me tickle the Baby so she woke up and cried. I don't believe in doing such mean things, yet I had to. I felt sorry for the mother, she was so upset! She said she could not understand what was the matter with that child to make it behave so! She didn't know that Jack was hiding back of the nursery door all the time.

PETER FOOL.

Well, I was as big a Fool as any of you and I don't mean to be one again. (*Very seriously.*) Listen to my plan! (*All the Fools gather around him.*) In a few minutes Jack will come to bed. That's our time. We must catch him and make a Fool of him!

AN APRIL FOOL

JENNY FOOL.

(Questioning.)

Make a Fool of him? How?

PETER FOOL.

(Slowly.)

We — will — make — him — one — of — us.
Let him know just how it feels to be a Fool. The first thing we will do is to dress him in some of our ridiculous clothes!

JENNY FOOL.

You certainly are clever, Peter. That's a fine plan. We will make him so uncomfortable to-night that he will never want to mention the first day of April again.

SIMON FOOL.

(Excited.)

Then this is the very last time we shall ever be Fools!

BABY FOOL.

(Frightened, weeps.)

What — shall — we — be — then?

(The Fools look at one another somewhat startled and puzzled. Tableau.)



Jenny Fool and Baby Fool

PETER FOOL.

(After a pause.)

I don't know what we shall be — At any rate we can't be anything worse than what we are now. *(Brightening.)* Maybe we shall become Easter Rabbits, or — or Hallowe'en Witches, or Pumpkin Boys —!!

JOLLY FOOL.

(With glee.)

Oh! Oh! I want to be one of Santa Claus' workmen and help fill the stockings!

JENNY FOOL.

(Wisely.)

Be sensible! We don't know what we shall be, but we do know that we don't want to be April Fools any longer. And that's what we must talk about to-night. *(Slowly.)* How shall we punish Jack? He has played so many jokes every year that we are tired of doing all his mischief. For one thing, I don't understand why his Mother puts up with him!

(Footsteps are heard and a boy's voice calling.)

VOICE.

(Without.)

Good night, Mother, good night! To-morrow is April Fools' Day!

PETER FOOL.

It's Jack! Hide, everybody!!

(He picks up the Baby and scampers back of the door. The others creep under the bed or behind the curtains. Jack enters in his pajamas and bath robe. He runs over to the window.)

JACK.

The moon is shining! It promises a fine day to-morrow. I am glad, for I have many things I want to do!

(While he is speaking Peter Fool creeps out of his hiding place and steals over to the boy. The others follow him.)

PETER FOOL.

(Indignantly.)

What are your plans, Boy?

JACK.

(Turning, startled.)

Oh, who — are — you?

PETER FOOL.

Never mind who we are. We all know you!

JENNY FOOL.

(Maliciously.)

How do you like our looks?

JACK.

(With anger.)

I don't! I think you look foolish!

JENNY FOOL.

So we do, but you made us so. *(Very slowly.)*
And — now — we — are — going — to — dress
— you — just — like — ourselves! Come, Jolly!
Simon! help me!

(Quickly the Fools begin to dress the struggling angry boy. Peter tucks him into his spotted jacket, Jenny slips off her white frilled skirt and fastens it around his waist. Simon pins on his broad neck-frill. Jolly puts into his hands a staff and bells, and fits the Baby's cap on his head. At first Jack struggles but at last he stands half crying in anger.)

ALL THE FOOLS.

(Laughing with great mirth.)

Now! Jack, you are one of us!

JOLLY FOOL.

Come, let's sing him a song of welcome.
(Forming a circle the Fools merrily clap their hands and stamp their feet as they sing.)



Simon Fool

SONG.

(Air: "Ten Little Indians.")

One little, Two little, Three little April Fools,
 Poor little, gay little, sad little April Fools,
 Four little, Five little, Six little April Fools,
 All on April Fool morning.

(Joining hands they prance around the indignant boy, singing their song.)

JENNY FOOL.

(Mockingly.)

You look just like me! Just like a Fool!

JACK.

(With wrath.)

I am not a Fool!

JENNY FOOL.

Oh, yes, you are! See, you even have your cap and bells. *(In jest.)* Do you know what we are going to do with you? *(Very solemnly.)* Listen, we are going to take you across the street to Robert Phillips' house and he will make a Fool of you all day to-morrow.

JACK.

(Half crying.)

I won't go.

JOLLY FOOL.

You must. Fools have to do what they are told.

JACK.

I have not spoken to Robert for a week. Ah, please don't make me go!

PETER FOOL.

(Severely.)

You must go. *(To the others.)* Lead him away, Jolly! Jenny, take his other arm! Now we are ready!

(The Fools drag the struggling boy toward the door. He has lost his cap and bells and has thrown away the staff, in his anger. As they reach the door he wildly breaks from their hold, pulls off his jacket and skirt, then rushes and flings himself into the bed.)

WOMAN'S VOICE.

(Outside.)

What is the matter, Jackie? Are you having a night-mare?

ALL THE FOOLS.

It's his mother!

(Hastily they gather up their clothes and scam-

per out of the open window, as the Mother enters in her night robe and boudoir cap. She holds a lighted candle. She looks dazed as though just awakened. She goes to the bed where the figure of the boy is hidden in the sheets.)

MOTHER.

(Tenderly.)

What's the matter, little boy?

JACK.

(Sitting up, breathless.)

The — Fools! — They — were — here!

MOTHER.

(Wondering.)

There is no one here, you've been dreaming! See, it's midnight! *(Looking toward the mantel.)* Why, the clock is stopped! Go to sleep again, little boy, and I will watch beside you.

(She smooths and tucks him tenderly between the covers, singing softly a little lullaby, as the curtain falls.)

FLOWER OF THE AGES

CHARACTERS

LOVE.
HOPE.
FAITH.
CHARITY.
LILY.
ROSE.
DAFFODIL.
LARKSPUR.
POPPY.
TULIP.

And many other beautiful Flowers.

COSTUMES

LOVE: Long white robe bordered with golden hearts (hearts cut from yellow cambric and pasted to skirt); pink girdle with golden hearts. Pink band with single heart for hair. Wand with golden heart.

FAITH: Pale green robe with flowing Grecian lines. Draperies of gold, golden band for hair.

HOPE: Rainbow Grecian robe. Wings of cardboard painted in rainbow hues.

CHARITY: Gray robe. Chaplet of olive leaves (cut from crêpe paper). Long garland of olive leaves.

ROSE: Red crêpe paper petals sewed to an old white slip or underskirt. Smaller petals for neck. Green waist girdle, and stockings.

LARKSPUR: Light blue dress of cheesecloth, green stockings. Blue flowers for hair.

LILY, TULIP, DAFFODIL, POPPY: The foundations for these four dresses are alike. Large flower petals are cut from crêpe paper and sewed on an old white slip.

White petals for the Lily, with smaller petals for sleeves. Green stockings and belt.

Orange and red petals for the Tulip, with green underskirt and stockings. Red slippers.

Big yellow petals for Daffodil, with Spring green underskirt. Little golden vest, big yellow bonnet.

Poppy's petals are like the Tulip's, but her underskirt is of black cambric and her stockings are black.

PROGRAM
FLOWER OF THE AGES

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

This is the story of —

HOPE
who was sent by

LOVE
to the Garden of Earth to find the Perfect
Flower to grow in the Hall of the Ages.
Within the

GARDEN (Settlement Stage)
are many wondrous

FLOWERS
but fairer far than all is the gentle spotless

LILY
Joyfully Hope bears this Perfect Gift to
grow beside the Throne, with

FAITH }
and }
CHARITY }
forever and ever.

THE STORY OF
FLOWER OF THE AGES

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

This is the story of the Hall of the Ages where Love lives with Faith and Hope and Charity. One day Love was very sad because she had been on the Earth since the World began and she had never been able to find a Perfect Flower that could promise to mankind peace and happiness that should never die.

Then she asked her Sisters if they in their long wanderings on the Earth had ever seen the Perfect Flower.

“Alas,” cried Faith and Charity, “you seek the impossible; no such Flower has ever grown. We know, dear Love, because we live in the world among the rich and the poor. In the crowded city and the far away countries we have traveled and there is no blossom that can give peace forever.”

Then Hope knelt before the Throne and her face was bright with promise.

“Send me to the Garden of the Earth,” she whispered, “and I will bring you the Perfect Flower to grow beside your Throne through all the ages.” Then Love sent Hope to the Garden of the Earth.

It was midnight when she came to the Garden and all the Flowers were sleeping. “How beautiful the World is!” cried Hope, and she wandered among the Roses and Daffodils and stooped to kiss the snow-white Lily. But all the Flowers were so wonderfully fair that she could not decide which was the Perfect one to take to Love.

From blossom to blossom she wandered and found all beautiful. Then a wonderful thought came to her.

“Awaken! awaken!” she called, bending over the sleeping ones, and her sweet voice was like the tinkling of happy bells.

Slowly the Flowers awoke and gazed around the Garden in astonishment. Who was the bold one who dared to disturb their sleep? “Sisters,” cried the Crimson Rose, “I heard a rude voice in my dreams!” And Hope stood in their midst and she looked fairer than any Flower, in her sparkling rainbow robes.

“Sisters,” cried the haughty Larkspur, “there is a stranger among us!” and all the Flowers

stood very tall and proud. But the White Lily spoke timidly to the others because it hurt her gentle heart that they should be so proud and selfish. "Bid the beautiful stranger stay," she begged, "the Garden is large enough for all." But they shook their perfumed petals in scorn.

"I have come on an errand from Love," Hope answered. "Listen to what I have to say." Then the haughty Flowers forgot their pride in their curiosity and gathered close to Hope, who told them how Love had sent her to the Earth that she might find the Perfect Flower to grow beside the Throne. "And each one of you," she said, "must tell me what gift you will take to Love so that I may know who is worthy to grow in the Hall of the Ages."

Then each Flower began to flaunt her perfumed petals and wave her graceful leaves, for each felt in her vain heart that *she* herself was the most beautiful gift.

"I am the Queen of all the Flowers," said the Crimson Rose. "It would be an honor to Love to have me by her side."

"And I will give all my glowing colors," cried the Tulip, and she held herself very stiff and straight.

"Love would not like your gift," answered Hope sadly.

"Take her my blue of the skies," whispered the Violet.

But Hope only shook her head. Her face looked very sorrowful and the rainbow colors of her robe grew pale because it was so hard to find the Perfect Flower.

"Your gifts are not fair enough to please sweet Love," she answered.

Last of all the Daffodil held out her golden robes. "I give *my* offering of gold," she said. "Gold is the greatest gift of life." And she looked prouder and grander than all the others.

Hope's heart was almost broken; her shining wings grew dull and drooped to the ground and her robes were dim and gray.

"Alas," she cried, "now I know there is no Perfect Flower. Pride and boastfulness and evil gold could never live near the Throne."

But the White Lily stole softly to her side and spoke such words of cheer that the rainbow tint returned to Hope's gray robes and her drooping wings once more grew shining like the stars.

"Take courage," the Lily whispered; "you need not go empty handed to the Throne. Take my gift to Love, but let me stay on earth. I must cheer man's saddened heart with the promise of Everlasting Life. Without my help in his hour of sorrow, his burden would be too hard to bear.

Let *me* stay and comfort him. Carry that promise to Love and let it grow beside the Throne."

With her face bright with happiness Hope arose, and when she left the Garden of Earth she carried in her hand the Perfect Gift of Flowers.

FLOWER OF THE AGES

ACT I

THE QUEST

SCENE: *Hall of the Ages. At the center of the stage, at the back, Love sits on her Throne with Faith and Hope kneeling on either side. They are dressed in flowing garments with draperies of golden tissue. Seated a little to the left of the Throne is Charity quietly weaving a garland of olive leaves. She is robed in pale gray spangled with gold. A wreath of green binds her hair.*

As the curtain rises Charity kneels before Love with her offering.

CHARITY.

(Very tenderly.)

These gifts I bring thee
Gifts of true charity
To ease the streaming eye
And broken heart.

Emblem of deeds well done
My greens can live alone
Binding sweet Charity
Close to the Throne.
May my gifts bloom for aye
Near to your Throne each day,
So that my work can be
Endless and true.
Hope, Faith, and Love to thee,
Sisters in charity,
Take them and let them be
Forever new.

LOVE.

Fair is your offering, and yet I see
No flower amidst your garland, Charity.
This glowing wreath would be indeed, more fair
If 'midst its leaves *one* flower were blooming there.

(Speaking to Faith.)

What say you, sister? Is this gift complete
Without a rainbow hue, or perfume sweet?
I crave your wisdom.

FAITH.

(Earnestly.)

Yes, your words are true,
The Perfect Gift must be of fairer hue.

(*To Charity.*)

Why do you bring these quiet greens alone,
Is there *no* gift more worthy of the Throne?
Have you not seen some bud or blossom fair,
To make your gift the one beyond compare?

CHARITY.

(*Rising.*)

Each leaf that binds my garland is a part
Of my World's work to bind a broken heart!
I cannot heal a wound, but I give rest
Of tranquil moments to the tortured breast,
And so my greens upon my wreath must be
The emblem of my work of charity.

HOPE.

(*Brightly to Love.*)

Love, take her gift! From Charity's kind store
'Tis all she has to give. What would you more?

LOVE.

(*With a beseeching gesture.*)

Alack! I know not! But my flower must be
A cure to broken hearts in misery.
The eye must brighten in its saddest hour
When 'midst its tears it gazes on my Flower.
It must pour sunlight in Death's shades and give
The promise that the soul shall always live.



Love

Oh, tell me! In your wanderings, have you seen
 In royal palace hall, or cottage mean,
 In busy high-road or in quiet dell
 The Flower of the Ages that will tell
 The story of another Life above?

CHARITY.

(Very sadly.)

Alas, that Flower has never grown, O Love!

FAITH.

O Charity, be still! Why say you so?

HOPE.

I do beseech you, never let hope go!

CHARITY.

(Simply.)

Over the earth I've wandered bold and free
 Fulfilling all the tasks of charity,
 In humble cottage and in palace bower.
 For ages I have worked and yet no Flower
 Such as Love speaks of, have I ever seen.

FAITH.

Is there no garden where you've never been?

CHARITY.

Not one, O Faith! Each grove and dell I know!



Faith

HOPE.

(Kneeling before the Throne.)

The Flower you seek, upon the earth does grow.
I feel it in my breast. Bid me depart
Unto the gardens of the Earth. Trust me, my
heart
Speaks truly. In an unknown valley fair
The Perfect Gift of Flowers is blooming there.
Let me go hence and find it — *me* alone!
And bear it back in rapture to the Throne!

LOVE.

(Touching the bowed head.)

Go! light-winged messenger, on sun's bright ray
Swift-footed seek the path-ways of the Day.
Dwell in man's heart through all his waking hours.
At midnight seek the Garden of the Flowers.

*(Hope rises and with bright uplifted face goes
on her mission to Earth.)*

CURTAIN



Hope

ACT II

EARTH'S GARDEN

SCENE: *An open woodland with the Flowers slumbering in the moonlight. Hope enters softly, her face alight with joy at the beauty around her.*

HOPE.

Oh, joy! what wondrous vision meets mine eyes!
Is this a spot on Earth or Paradise?
O, still calm moon, shine on! O, sleepy dew,
How hushed you lie! O, buds that break anew
The midnight mold, you bless in silent hours
With each new birth, the Garden of the Flowers.

(Going from flower to flower.)

How soft they slumber! Soft each sweet repose!

(Kneeling by the Rose.)

Oh, what is fairer than the Crimson Rose?
And yet — yon Tulips standing straight and fair,
Most wondrous are the robes they proudly wear!
Blue Violet! Daffodil! which one above
Shall I bear hence to grace the Throne of Love?



Charity

My heart is puzzled, for so fair they grow.
Which one the Perfect Flower I do not know!

(She stands a moment in deep thought.)

I cannot choose one as they slumber there
All do so gracious look and all so fair!
But each must tell what offering she will take
Unto the Throne of Love — Awake! Awake!

*(Slowly the Flowers awaken, and stand gazing
at Hope in anger and surprise.)*

RED ROSE.

(Crossly.)

Sisters! a voice my happy slumbers broke.
O, tell me if you can, the Flower that spoke!

HOPE.

'Twas I — my friends!

DAFFODIL.

(Scornfully.)

Indeed! 'tis clear,
An unsought stranger in the dell is here!

RED ROSE.

(With dignity.)

The Flowers of the Garden bid you tell
Your name, your parentage, and where you dwell.





Rose

The loveliest blossoms of the Earth do grow
 Within this grove — and all the Flowers we know.
 I bid you speak.

HOPE.

(Sweetly.)

Within the Garden of man's heart alone
 My dwelling is — No happier place I've known.
 Your Garden is too small for me. I came
 Upon an errand only. Hope's my name!

LARKSPUR.

(Haughtily.)

A simple name! What right had you to wake us
 from
 Our sleep; our dreams so rudely break?

(To the other Flowers.)

I pray you, Sisters, bid the stranger go.
 We want no Flower that we do not know.

LILY.

(Timidly.)

Ah, hush! Speak not so rudely! Do we own
 This Garden? We but grew where we were
 sown!
 This Dell is meant for all. No seed can grow
 Within the Earth but God has meant it so.



Larkspur

To send all others from our home away
 Is ill and selfish. (*To Hope.*) Hope, I pray
 you stay!

HOPE.

For that I thank you. For a space I'll rest
 And tell to you the meaning of my quest!
 This is my errand here — on wings of light
 Sweet Love has sent me to your grove this night
 To choose, from out your band, the Fairest
 Flower.

POPPY.

(*In sleepy, indignant tones.*)

'Tis a strange hour
 For such a mission. Why could you not wait
 Until our dreams are past? (*Drowsily.*)
 'Tis — not — too — late —
 E'en — now — to — sleep — some more —

(*She sinks upon the ground and sleeps.*)

DAFFODIL.

(*Eagerly.*)

Yes, wait till morn
 Before you choose. Lo, fast comes the dawn!
 'Twould be a poor choice! 'Tis too dark to say
 Which is the fairest. Let us wait till day!



Lily

HOPE.

No, that I cannot. 'Twas at midnight hours
Love sent me to the Garden of the Flowers,
So all must harken.

(To the Rose.)

Speak the truth alone,
What is your gift to offer at the Throne?

ROSE.

(Proudly.)

Look at my vestures. Are they not most fair?
No other Flowers in beauty can compare!
Smell of my fragrance. Is it not most sweet?
No Garden on the earth can be complete
Without my graces. There is no Flower that
grows
In all the World fair as the queenly Rose.

HOPE.

(Sadly.)

Alack, yours is no gift to please sweet Love.

(To the Tulip.)

What is your offering?

TULIP.

(Bowling in pride.)

No bloom above



Tulip

The Crimson Tulip yet has ever grown —
My gift of colors I will give the Throne.

HOPE.

'Tis not enough, although your hues are bright!
Alas! and must my mission end this night?
Bright Daffodil, give comfort! Do you hold
Some wondrous offering?

DAFFODIL.

(*Greedily.*)

My gift is gold!
Oh, take me with you! Love can always buy
Of all earth's happiness when I am nigh,
For there is naught on earth that can't be sold,
The greatest gift of Life is gold — gold — gold!

HOPE.

(*In despair.*)

Go, get you hence! (*Kneeling in misery.*) O
Faith, O Charity,
Your words are all too true, come comfort me.
My mission here is dead. O Evil hour!
I know at last there is *no* Perfect Flower.
My quest is over. I must go alone
Without the promised offering to the Throne.

(*There is a deep stillness, then the White Lily
steals softly to her side.*)



Poppy

LILY.

(Gently.)

Hope, take comfort, dry your sorrowing eyes;
The search was true that brought you from the
skies.

Take my gift to Love, but let me stay
Upon the Earth, I cannot go away,
My place is here, and here I must abide
The mourner's only hope when all has died.
A promise of the Father's Life I give,
And by my Flower they know that all shall live.
Take my only offering to the Throne —
The Gift of Everlasting Life alone!

HOPE.

(Rising triumphant.)

O, happy hope that brought me here! O blest
And happy is the ending of my quest!

*(She draws the Lily into the circle before all
the Flowers, who kneel in penitence.)*

I bear your gift to Love! O happy hour,
To lay before the Throne the Perfect Flower!
Flower of the Ages, blest shall be your name.

(To the Flowers.)

O, envious Blossoms, bow your heads in shame,

Hide your proud vestures, flaunt no more in
pride,
Your glowing colors in your Garden hide.
The story of the Lily, learn to tell
Through all the Ages. Now farewell, farewell.

CURTAIN

THE PRAYER OF THE FOREST
SPIRIT

CHARACTERS

KAY.

ROBIN REDBREAST.

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

SPIRIT OF THE WILLOW.

SPIRIT OF THE PINE.

SPIRIT OF THE MAPLE.

*And any number of Tree Spirits that dwell in
the Forest.*

COSTUMES

ROBIN REDBREAST: Boy's one piece union suit, dyed red. Brown mantle. Little tight fitting red hood.

SPIRIT OF THE OAK: Brown flowing robe without sleeves. Pale green gauze veil covering the face and figure. A wreath of oak leaves about the brow.

All the Spirits are dressed alike; their robes vary in shades of brown, and the garlands are of leaves of the different Trees.

KAY: Short tunic coat of canton flannel, plum color. The tights of same color are made of a union suit dyed. The tall shoes are a man's black socks, with the top rolled. The hat is of black flannel, with a quill.

PROGRAM
THE PRAYER OF THE FOREST
SPIRIT

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

Sad news is brought to the
FOREST (Settlement Stage)
because —
KAY
the Woodcutter lad, is hastening that morn
to cut down the great Oak for his cottage
fire.
ROBIN REDBREAST
is the sad messenger. Mournfully the
SPIRIT OF THE WILLOW
and the
SPIRIT OF THE MAPLE
and the
SPIRIT OF THE PINE
beg her life in vain. At last the
SPIRIT OF THE OAK
with her gentle prayer for safety touches
Kay's heart and the Trees of the Forest are
safe forever!

THE STORY OF
THE PRAYER OF THE FOREST
SPIRIT

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

In a far away country there stood a wonderful Forest where all the Trees of the world grew, and in each Tree there lived a wild elf-like creature all green and brown and gold, with long loose hair and twinkling hands and feet.

This was the Spirit of the Tree. When the Tree grew and blossomed and flourished the Spirit was fairer and full of splendid colors and sweet laughing music, but when the Tree withered and died then the Spirit became paler and weaker and at last was nothing but a handful of brown broken leaves.

Now it happened that the Robin overheard Kay, the Woodcutter, say that he was going that day to the Forest to cut down the great Oak for his cottage fire. Away flew Robin to tell the Trees the terrible news.

The poor little frightened Spirit of the Oak wept when she heard of her fate. All the other

Trees were very angry and indignant, and they begged the Robin to save her.

“Peck out Kay’s eyes with your sharp beak,” said the dark Pine Spirit.

“Wound Kay’s hand with your strong hard claws,” cried the Spirit of the Maple.

“Sing with your sweet voice that Kay may forget to work,” said the Spirit of the Willow.

But the Robin sadly answered that the only way to save the Oak was to reach Kay’s Heart.

“For a human Heart,” he said, “is a strange thing! Whate’er it bids a mortal to do — he must obey!”

Then mournfully the Robin flew back to his nest in the Apple Tree near Kay’s cottage.

All was silent in the Forest — a deep — deep — stillness, then Kay entered. At the sight of his glistening ax the little Spirits vanished into their Trees — all but the Spirit of the Oak. Timidly she came and stood before the boy.

Now Kay did not believe in Fairies and he had never seen a Spirit before, so he looked with great wonder at this strange elf-like creature with long loose hair and green mysterious eyes. She was so lovely that she took his breath away.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I am the Spirit of the Oak Tree which you have come to destroy.”

Kay's heart was saddened when she spoke, because he did not want to hurt any one so beautiful.

Kneeling, the Spirit begged him to spare her life and the lives of her Forest Sisters. Her prayer was very pitiful.

Kay's heart grew sadder and sadder and he hid his shining ax among the fern leaves, because he could not bear to hurt any one with such a wonderful voice.

"Dear Woodcutter's Heart," the Spirit whispered earnestly, remembering the Robin's advice, "bid your hands do me no harm."

Then Kay's heart was reached at last! Holding on high his ax he cried—"Behold! this is my answer!" and flung it far, far into the deep Forest. So the Tree was saved.

THE PRAYER OF THE FOREST SPIRIT

ACT I

KAY'S HEART

SCENE: *The Forest. As the curtain rises Robin Redbreast stands in the woodland, with head back thrown calling clearly —*

ROBIN.

(Musically.)

Hi yo! Hi yo! Spirits of the Forest, hasten, hither. *(Silence. His call is louder.)* Hasten, hasten!

(There is a soft rustling of light feet and from all directions the Spirits of the Trees come flitting into the open woodland space. As they enter they break forth in song. Their voices have a sweet lilting rhythm.)

SONG

(Air: "If a body meet a body.")

Oak and Maple, Beech and Willow,
Coming at your call.

Echo, Wood, with merry laughter,
 Coming, coming, all!
 Oak and Maple, Beech and Willow,
 Pine and Linden Tree,
 Rustling, waving leaves and branches,
 In the Forest free.

ROBIN.

(Sternly, interrupting.)

Hush your song, little comrades, I have brought
 sad and cruel news to the Forest.

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

(Surprised.)

Sad news? Tell us what you mean! Nothing
 sad can live here. There is beauty and happiness
 always in the Forest.

ROBIN.

(As the Spirits gather close to him.)

Listen, I was sitting this morning on the Apple
 Tree near the cottage of Kay, the Woodcutter lad,
 and I heard him talking to his mother —

SPIRITS.

(Anxiously, interrupting.)

Yes! Yes! Tell us what said he.

ROBIN.

(With sadness.)

Alas, it will give you sorrow when you hear!
He said that he would come this day to the Forest
and cut down the great Oak Tree for his cottage
fire!

SPIRITS.

(Wildly.)

Alas! Alas! misery has come to the Forest!

SPIRIT OF THE PINE.

It is not right that the beautiful Oak should
die! She has been our true friend for centuries.

SPIRIT OF THE WILLOW.

(Pleadingly.)

Dear Robin, help us!

ROBIN.

How so? I am only a Bird!

SPIRIT OF THE MAPLE.

(With anger.)

Your bill is sharp! Peck out his eyes that he
may not see us.

SPIRIT OF THE PINE.

Your claws are strong. Wound his hand that
he may not use his ax.



Robin

SPIRIT OF THE WILLOW.

(Gently.)

Your voice is sweet. Sing to him that he may dream and forget his work.

ROBIN.

(More sadly.)

I cannot. It is the law that Birds and Beasts are made for man. I have no power over his hand or his work. *(Impressively.)* It is his Heart alone that you must reach. For the human Heart rules the human will.

SPIRIT OF THE WILLOW.

(Wondering.)

What is a Heart? When the wind calls, my branches move and my leaves rustle — I have no power to stop them. But with mortals it is different. A Heart, mayhap, is like the wind: whene'er it calls the lad must do its bidding? Tell me.

ROBIN.

The human Heart is a strange thing. 'Tis past all understanding. *(With deep sadness.)* Dear little comrades, 'tis useless to try and save your Trees unless you can reach Kay's Heart. This morn he will go to the Forest. Now I must bid farewell to the beautiful Oak. *(Tenderly touch-*



Kay

ing the bent head of the grief-stricken Oak.) I return to my nest but always I will remember you. Farewell!

(He leaves the silent group as Kay with his shining ax briskly enters the wood. At the sight of him the Spirits silently steal back to their homes and the stage is empty save for the solitary figure of the lad.)

KAY.

(Brightly.)

How fair the Forest is this morn! I have never seen it look so beautiful. Everything seems awake. There are birds and butterflies everywhere. *(Surprised.)* Even the leaves on the Trees are rustling and the very branches are bending though no wind is astir. Hark! — what is that?

(Like an echo the voices of the Tree Spirits rise faintly in a song of grief.)

SONG

(Air: "Maryland, my Maryland.")

The Forest Trees are lost in woe,
Mournfully, ah, mournfully!
The leaves and boughs are bending low,
Mournfully, ah, mournfully!
The shining ax is waiting nigh,



Spirit of the Oak

O, Human Heart, why should we die?
 We give our grace to Earth and Sky,
 Happily, ah, happily!

KAY.

Surely that is a song I hear! Strange and elf-like music! and yet — the wood is empty! Mayhap it was the rustling of the Trees or — what is that? —

(As he speaks the Spirit of the Oak Tree steals timidly into the woodland and kneels before the boy.)

SPIRIT.

(With anguish.)

Spare me!

KAY.

(Gazing at her in wonder.)

Spare you? I could not hurt anything so beautiful. Who are you? Where do you live?

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

(Rising with clasped hands.)

I am the Spirit of the Oak Tree. This Forest is my home.

KAY.

(Astonished.)

The — Spirit — of the — Oak — Tree? Is it



Pine.



Maple.



Willow.



Beech



Linden



Birch.



Oak.

Leaves

true? I did not know that Fays and Spirits were real.

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

(*Simply.*)

We are not often seen by human eyes. Each time a mortal views us we lose some of our Fairy Gold and it takes centuries to gain it back again. (*Very sadly.*) This is the first time that mortal eyes have ever looked upon me.

KAY.

(*In admiration.*)

Glad I am that I came to the Forest to-day. Tell me, beautiful creature, why do you come to me?

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

To reach your Heart!

KAY.

(*Questioning.*)

To — reach — my — Heart?

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

(*Earnestly.*)

The Robin said it. He told me if I could reach your Heart, perchance you would spare my life,— for 'tis a mortal's Heart that rules

his hands. (*Pleadingly.*) Dear Woodcutter's Heart, I pray you bid your hands to do me no harm.

KAY.

You plead well — and you are so beautiful! I fain would grant your prayer.

SPIRIT OF THE OAK.

(*With great feeling.*)

Spare my life — and the lives of my Forest Sisters. For centuries we have dwelt together, giving our shade to all — giving our fruit and blossoms to those who sought our gifts — Through winter's cold and summer's heat we are ever the friends of man.

KAY.

(*Holding on high his ax.*)

This is your answer. Behold! (*He casts it far into the Forest.*) You have reached my Heart, dear Woodland creature. Live in peace!

(*As he speaks the Forest is alive with the grateful Spirits. Singing their song of thankfulness, they gather around the lad.*)

114 PRAYER OF FOREST SPIRIT

SONG

(*Air: "If a body meet a body."*)

Oak and Maple, Beech and Willow,
Come with praises clear;
Echo, Wood, our grateful voices,
Earth and Heaven, hear!
Oak and Maple, Beech and Willow,
Pine and Linden Tree,
Will your loving Heart, remember
In the Forest free.

CURTAIN

ON ALL SOULS' EVE

CHARACTERS

GODFREY.

BLACKFOOT.

FAIRY QUEEN.

FAYS.

GRAYBEARD.

OLD WITCH.

OWL.

*And other Imps, and Sprites and Gnomes who
live in Fairy-Land.*

COSTUMES

GODFREY: Gray blue smock. Gray trousers. Red woolen stockings. Low black shoes with buckles.

BLACKFOOT: One piece hooded-suit of black lining. Tail of black fur. The wrists of the sleeves are stitched to hide the hands.

FAIRY QUEEN: Flowing white seamless robe bordered with real or artificial leaves (cut from crêpe paper). Wreath on hair. Wings of tinted cardboard. Silver Wand with golden star.

WITCH: Red hooded cloak. Black hat with white band and black moon. (Moons are made from black cambric pasted on a white cambric band.) Black flowing robe beneath. Staff.

GRAYBEARD: Goblin suit of red canton flannel. Beard of fluffy cotton. Leather belt.

OWL: Suit of brown lining. A boy's one piece night drawer pattern may be used. The arm holes are stitched, as the child's arms should not be seen.

FAY: Green robe, knee length. Brown stockings. The skirt and sleeves are cut to represent grass. The Fairy antennæ are made of hat wire with bits of feathers glued to the end, and fastened to the head by a rubber band.

The boys are dressed alike — varying in colors.

ELF: Sleeveless tunic of green cambric. Brown hose and hood. Large wings of pale pink cardboard. The Elves are dressed alike — varying in color.

PROGRAM
ON ALL SOULS' EVE

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

GODFREY
the little lame lad, is carried to the

FAIRY GREEN (Settlement Stage)
by

BLACKFOOT
the cottage Cat. Alas! there is sorrow in
Fairyland because the Magic Ring of the

FAIRY QUEEN
has been stolen.

THE FAYS
weeping wildly, search for the gem.

GRAYBEARD
the dwarf, peers anxiously among the ferns
and bushes — while the

OLD WITCH
vainly mutters her charms over her steaming
caldron. Then Godfrey spies the Ring
glistening in the beak of the wicked

OWL
and behold the Queen gives him the Fairy's
gift of thanks, and he stands a strong little
peasant lad, that All Souls' Eve!

THE STORY OF
ON ALL SOULS' EVE

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

This is a real true fairy story — all about Witches and Fays, Goblins and Imps, and a big black Cat! Well, it was on Hallowe'en and all the Fairies from Fairyland were having a fine party under the magic Oak not far from the cottage of Godfrey, a little lame peasant boy. And while they were a-dancing in the moonlight, he was a-sighing in his cottage because he would never be able to walk again. As he sat grieving, Black-foot, the Cat, got up from the hearth where he had been blinking at the fire — and stretched himself and stood beside the boy. "Master," said he, "get on my back and I'll carry you to the Fairy Green!" Of course the boy climbed on his strong back and — out of the window they flew — over the village — across the moors, until they came to the Fairy Green.

But alas! beneath the magic Oak all was excitement — the beautiful Queen lay fainting, her Fays

were weeping and wringing their little hands — the Goblins and the Imps were peering around among the grasses and the old Witch was muttering her magic charm over the steaming caldron.

But the old brown Owl sat by himself blinking his evil eyes. Something was certainly wrong in Fairyland.

“What is the trouble?” cried Blackfoot. There was a stillness in the circle — no one moved or spoke! — then one of the weeping Fays whispered — “The Magic Ring is — lost,” and all the ferns and grasses and trees began to sigh — “The Magic Ring — is lost — lost — l o s t.” But the old brown Owl sat by himself blinking his evil eyes, and close to him sat the little lame boy, watching. “Ho! ho!” mocked the Owl, “you will never find that Ring, never! never! never!” And behold! as he spoke Godfrey saw something glistening in his beak! And when the boy whispered his secret in Blackfoot’s ear, gracious! you should have seen how excited the Cat was! Every hair stood out straight all over his furry body and he ran to the Throne and almost shouted at the poor fainting Queen — “Your Majesty, there is a thief in Fairyland — bid me find him!”

A thief — in — Fairy — land! There had never been such a thing since the world began! And all the Fairies and Imps and Goblins began

to look around to discover who it might be,— all but the big brown Owl — he sat blinking with his wicked eyes. “Shake out your feathers, old Owl,” said Blackfoot, going up to him, “maybe you are the Thief!” But the Owl grew angry and refused to move, so the Cat had to see for himself and he began searching among the Owl’s feathers,— beneath his wings — and in his pointed ears — then suddenly pulled open his beak and there was the Ring!

I need not tell you what happiness there was in Fairyland. The Goblins and Imps almost lost their wits with joy and the Queen sat on the Throne gazing at her loved Ring as though she was afraid it would disappear again.

At last they decided that the wicked Owl should be punished — so they bound and cast him into his prison, which was deep, deep down in the trunk of the old Oak Tree, and there he is to this day!

The Fairy people were not the only grateful ones; Godfrey, the little lame boy, was made the happiest child in all England, for the Fairy Queen touched his poor lame foot with her Magic Wand and made it well and strong once more.

Now all this happened on Hallowe’en a hundred years ago.— So you can never tell what may happen to you on Hallowe’en.

ON ALL SOULS' EVE

ACT I

THE FAIRY CAT

SCENE: *The kitchen. Godfrey sits listlessly before the open fire. Near the hearthside is Blackfoot, the cottage Cat. Through the half-open window is seen the moonlight. All is quiet within.*

GODFREY.

How fair the moon is shining! I can hear the leaves rustling on the oak tree from here. (*Sadly.*) Everything is moving save I! How can a lad with one sick foot be aught but useless? Oh, if I could only walk again! To race the moors with the winds blowing on my face — to be amidst the heather — but alack, how wild I talk! As helpless as a babe I am, with one sick foot long past mending.

(*He sits, his face buried in his hands, in misery. Blackfoot, the Cat, leaves his place near the hearth and stands by the boy.*)

BLACKFOOT.

(*Softly.*)

Master!

GODFREY.

(*Startled.*)

Who speaks? I thought I heard a voice, yet the room is empty. Mayhap it was an echo from the moors — the villagers are abroad on such a fair night, or mayhap it was Andrew's sheep that have strayed beyond the fold and he is seeking them.

(*He gazes from the window for a few moments, then starts back in astonishment.*)

What was it that passed by? All in green it was and it smiled on me! (*Wisely.*) I'll not look from the casement again, my wits are astray for want of company. (*He wistfully strokes the Cat, who rubs himself close to his side.*) How wise you look, Blackfoot, as though all the knowledge of the world lay back of those bright eyes. Tell me, Wise One, tell me who spoke!

BLACKFOOT.

(*Clearly.*)

I did, Master!

GODFREY.

(*Amazed.*)

Day of my life, am I crazed! Is it the Cat who speaks?

BLACKFOOT.

Of course it was I. Did you think it was only mortal folk who had the power of speech? Know you not that this is All Souls' Eve when the Fairy Folk have power on the Earth? On this night every year the Fairy Queen bids all her animal subjects to speak, and we meet beneath the Oak Tree for the revels.

GODFREY.

The Fairy Queen? The Oak Tree? Is it true? The Wise Woman has oft told me, but I believed her not.

BLACKFOOT.

(Indignant.)

It is as true as you and I! 'Tis the aged only who do not believe in Fairies. 'Tis the Wise Woman who has the heart of a child, though her hair is as white as the snow in winter. You are still young in years, lad, where is your faith?

GODFREY.

(Brokenly.)

Alack, 'tis true! I am losing faith in all things! But 'tis this evil foot that is the cause of it all. For three long years I have not seen beyond the



Godfrey

casement yonder and my heart is longing for the moors once more.

(He buries his face in his hand, sobbing.)

BLACKFOOT.

(Pityingly.)

I love you, Master, I love you, you have been kind to me always. A sad day it was for me when Andrew brought you home, three years ago, bruised and broken by the fallen boulder. Dear Master, even in your pain you ever had kind words for me.

GODFREY.

(With a brave effort.)

What idle tears! If my limbs are weak, my heart must be the stronger. *(To the Cat.)* Cheer me, dear Blackfoot, tell me of the Fairy revels. Mayhap it will bring me sleep, for the hour grows late.

BLACKFOOT.

(Briskly.)

Late? And I have not yet made myself beautiful for our Queen.

(He begins to lick his paws and fur cat-wise, as the boy sitting opposite, watches smilingly.)

BLACKFOOT.

How looks it? Am I fair? Does every hair lie smooth like satin? It would not do for me to go before our Queen in poor attire.

GODFREY.

You are the bravest Cat in all Fairyland. There is no fur half so fine as yours, I know. (*As the Cat crosses to the window.*) Ah, dear Blackfoot, must you go? Don't leave me, I am so lonely here.

BLACKFOOT.

I must be at the Oak Tree ere midnight. It would not do that I, Blackfoot, the finest Cat in the hamlet, should stay away. Some would say that I was not loyal to our Queen.

(*There is a pause, the Cat stands by the open window with his paws raised as though springing out, but he gazes anxiously at the miserable little figure of the lonely boy, then he returns to the hearthside.*)

BLACKFOOT.

(*Tenderly.*)

Master!

GODFREY.

(*Wistfully.*)

I thought you were away.

BLACKFOOT.

I could not go and leave you sorrowing. Come with me, Master, come with me to the Fairies' reveling!

GODFREY.

(Bitterly pointing to his foot.)

'Twould be a poor journey with me for a companion. No, dear Blackfoot, you speak well, but go you alone.

BLACKFOOT.

(Earnestly.)

I am here to serve. My back is broad and I am strong. Mount, mount, good Master, and like the wind's breath we will be gone!

GODFREY.

(Slowly, with out-stretched hands.)

You will bear me across the moors? To the Fairy circle we will go? Is — it — true?

BLACKFOOT.

No steed in all the land will carry you in greater safety! Swift as the moor-hawk we will fly. Mount! mount, and ere midnight we will be away!

(Timidly the boy climbs upon the Cat's back — and they go toward the open window, as the curtain falls.)



Blackfoot

ACT II

THE MAGIC RING

SCENE: *The Fairy Green. There is sorrow and confusion beneath the old Oak Tree,—the Fairy Queen lies fainting with her attendant maidens gathered around her anxiously — some are fanning her with fern leaves, others are rubbing her little cold hands. The old Witch is muttering a charm over her steaming caldron, while Graybeard, the Dwarf, peers eagerly into its depths. Fays and Gnomes, Imps and Sprites are creeping among the tall grasses and ferns as though in search, while the big brown Owl sits by himself watching. All is confusion in the Fairy circle.*

WITCH.

(*Chanting.*)

Burn, burn, burn,
Glistening, mystic flame,
The golden Ring of the Fairy Queen
Has been stolen away and is not seen.
Tell me the culprit's name!

GRAYBEARD.

What says it, Mistress? What says it? Whatever name is written on its waters, we will bear the owner to the deepest dungeons of the underworld and there he shall stay forever.

WITCH.

Silence, Graybeard! Disturb not my charms with your idle words. (*Singing.*)

Burn, Flame, burn,
Charmed waters show,
Be it a Fay or an Elfin Sprite,
Read me his name on All Souls' Night
That I the Thief may know.

OWL.

(*Mockingly.*)

Ha! ha! If you had asked my help the gem would have been found ere this! Your Fays can stumble in the grasses till they tire, small good will be their searching. (*With malice.*) Ha! Ha!

WITCH.

(*Shrilly.*)

Silence, evil Bird! Look you that I don't read your name in my — brewing! (*Chanting eagerly.*) Burn, Flame, burn!

FAIRY MAIDEN.

(Near the Queen.)

Alas, alas! her Majesty is fainting! (*To a Fay.*) Hasten, Fernleaf, gather up some dew-drops from the mosses to bathe her brow. (*Sadly.*) How cold she is! The crown lies like a weight upon her gentle head.

FERNLEAF.

(Kneeling, her hands cupped with silver dew.)

Ah, Your Majesty, awake! awake! The Ring will yet be found. We will search all Fairyland and ere the sun's first rays you shall wear the golden band once more!

WITCH.

(Interrupting, wildly.)

Silence all! In my black caldron I dimly see a name —

(There is a deep stillness and all the gathering await the terrible news. Then the silence is broken by Blackfoot springing into the circle with Godfrey clinging to his back.)

BLACKFOOT.

We are here at last. It is long past midnight, I know, for the clock struck twelve as we flew over the village. We are glad to be here.



The Owl

(He gently places the lame boy on a heap of soft leaves near the gloomy Owl. Then he is aware of the silence and misery in the gathering.)

BLACKFOOT.

(Amazed.)

What is the trouble? Where are the music and dancing that were wont to grace our revels? See you those Tree Sprites! There are tears on their cheeks! What has befallen?

FAIRY MAIDEN.

(In heartbroken tones.)

Alas, the Magic Ring!

BLACKFOOT.

(Questioning.)

The magic Ring?

FERNLEAF.

Alack! alack! The magic Ring!

BLACKFOOT.

(With impatience.)

What of the Ring? For centuries our Queen has worn it. Is it the first time that you have seen it that you all stand and whisper its name?



Fairy Queen

OWL.

(With evil laughter.)

Ha! ha! you will see it no more! It is lost — lost — lost!

BLACKFOOT.

Be still, old Wise Cap! *(To the others.)* Is — it — true?

GRAYBEARD.

He speaks the truth. The Magic Ring is gone. Our Queen was so gay to-night that she and her maidens danced beneath the Oak Tree as twilight fell, and behold — the Ring slipped from her finger and vanished. What has become of it we do not know.

BLACKFOOT.

(With determination.)

It must be found!

(While they are speaking Godfrey sits watching the Owl. Suddenly he calls softly.)

GODFREY.

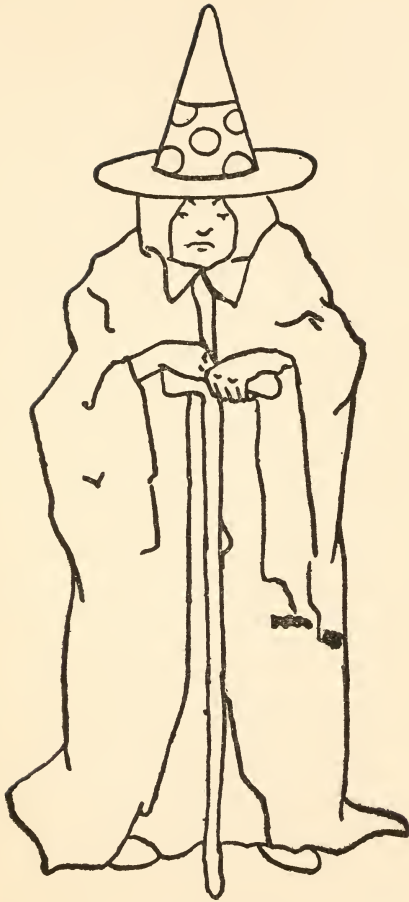
(Calling.)

Blackfoot, come hither!

BLACKFOOT.

(Hastening to him.)

What is it, Master?



Old Witch

(Godfrey whispers and points to the Owl. Blackfoot starts in astonishment and horror and then hurries to the Throne.)

BLACKFOOT.

(Sternly.)

Your Majesty, the Magic Circle has been searched and the Ring not found. I crave that every Fay and Sprite, every Goblin and Gnome should prove his innocence. Bid me search and find the Thief.

(All the Fays, etc., exclaim — "Yes, yes, make search, prove our innocence." All are eager to show the Queen their loyalty.)

FAIRY QUEEN.

(Rising, weakly.)

You speak well. Find the Evil One who bears in secret my golden Ring.

BLACKFOOT.

(Going directly to the Owl.)

Shake out your feathers, old Wise Cap!
Mayhap the gem is hidden there!

OWL.

(Drawing back.)

Go hence! Are there no others in the gather-



Graybeard

ing? Look elsewhere and you will find the thief close to the Throne. Leave me in peace!

BLACKFOOT.

No! No! prove your innocence!

(He begins to poke among the Owl's feathers under his wings, etc. All the Fairies stand breathlessly waiting, but the Ring is not found.)

BLACKFOOT.

(Very slowly.)

Open — wide — your — beak — old Wise Cap. Mayhap the gem is hidden there.

(The Owl draws away in anger. Then a struggle follows. At last the Cat pulls open the beak of the old gray Owl, and behold, there is the Ring!)

BLACKFOOT.

(Holding on high the Ring.)

Behold, the Thief!

ALL THE FAIRY GATHERING.

(Wailing.)

The thief! the thief!

WITCH.

(Shrilly.)

Behold, I see the name written in blood — it is the Owl!



Fay

FAIRY QUEEN.

(*Taking her Ring.*)

Ah, my loved Ring! (*Very sadly.*) My subjects, there is a thief among us, the first thief ever found in Fairyland — He must be punished!

ALL THE FAIRY GATHERING.

The thief! the thief! what is his punishment?

FAIRY QUEEN.

(*Very solemnly.*)

This spot is accursed — a fit place for the evil Owl, and here he must stay. Graybeard, bind the wicked Bird and cast him into the deep trunk of the Oak Tree. There he shall live forever. (*To the others.*) And now, my Fairies, we must away. We can never come here again. On next All Souls' Eve we will hold our revels afar, near other moors — Go, I follow you!

(*Silently the Fays and Sprites steal from the grove. All but the Cat, he stands quietly by the little boy's side.*)

FAIRY QUEEN.

(*Seeing the Cat.*)

What now, Dullears, pay you no heed to my words? I bade you be gone.



Imp

BLACKFOOT.

(Bravely.)

Your Majesty has ever taught us to do good deeds and help those in need. I could not leave my Master helpless on this evil spot. There is no heart in all the hamlet so kind and thoughtful as his.

FAIRY QUEEN.

(Looking kindly at Godfrey who sits gazing at her in admiration.)

His face is as good as his heart!

BLACKFOOT.

(With pride.)

Though his limbs are weak his eyes are always bright and are forever seeing kind things to do for others. Indeed, it was his bright sharp eyes that saw the Magic Ring glistening in the Owl's wicked beak. Without his help the gem would not have been found even now.

FAIRY QUEEN.

(Amazed.)

Say you so? Then deep is my gratitude. *(To the boy.)* Speak, dear lad, whatever wish is in your heart it shall be granted you.

GODFREY.

(Simply, pointing to his lame foot.)

I cannot walk.

FAIRY QUEEN.

(Tenderly bending.)

Poor, poor feet! poor tired little limbs waiting for their freedom!

(She touches his lame foot with her Wand and Godfrey stands strong and well once more.)

You have chosen well, dear lad. Health is the greatest gift in all the world. I give you that once more, the Fairy's gift of thanks this All Souls' Eve.

CURTAIN

THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

CHARACTERS

MRS. CLUCK.

SIX CHICKS.

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

SIX DUCKLINGS.

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

TURKEY GOBBLER.

PUMPKIN PIE.

COSTUMES

- MRS. CLUCK AND CHICKS:** One piece suit of gray. Red flannel wattles and comb. The suit is sleeveless, the children's arms are hidden. Wings of gray cardboard. The little chicks have no wattles or combs.
- MADAM WADDLE-DUCK:** One piece suit of soft yellow cotton flannel. The suit is large enough for the child to wear her dress beneath it to give the fat stuffy appearance of a duck. Tail of yellow cotton.
- BANTAM COCKTAIL:** Tight fitting one piece suit of red. Brown tail and wings.
- MR. GOBBLER:** One piece suit of brown. Hood made separate of bright red flannel. Wings and tail made of heavy brown wrapping paper, richly colored.
- PUMPKIN PIE:** Real Jack-o'-Lantern head. Green waist, undersuit of yellow. Green pointed shoes made of cambric stuffed with cotton.

PROGRAM

THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

There is great fear in the hearts of the
Barnyard Folk:

MRS. CLUCK
and her

CHICKENS

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK
and her

DUCKLINGS
and cheery little

BANTAM COCKTAIL
because one of them is sure to be roasted
for Thanksgiving. While they are waiting
for their doom, good news is brought to
them by a

PUMPKIN PIE
who tells of the terrible fate of the proud,
quarrelsome

GOBBLER-TURKEY
and happiness returns to the Barn-yard!

THE STORY OF
THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

It was the day before Thanksgiving and there was great fear in the Barn Yard. Some one was going to be killed and stuffed and roasted and eaten for the Thanksgiving Dinner.

Mrs. Cluck, the old speckled Hen, was calling anxiously from behind her barred Coop, for her Chickens.

“Cluck, cluck!” she cried. “Where are you, my Children?”

The old Turkey Gobbler stood by and mocked her fears.

“Why don’t you keep your Children at home?” said Madam Waddle-Duck. “My own babies are well brought up!” and she stood in front of the Coop very proudly.

“My little Chicks wish to see the wide world, they are so clever,” answered Mrs. Cluck, but she spoke fearfully — “Ah, dear Madam Waddles,

will you please ask Bantam Cocktail to call them home, I want them near me to-day, because — to-morrow — is — Thanksgiving! ”

And the old Turkey Gobbler stood by and mocked her fears.

Then Bantam Cocktail went to the Barn Yard gate and stretched his bit of a neck and flapped his bits of wings and called in his bit of a voice — “Cock-a-doodle-doo,” and he called until the six little Chickens came scampering home.

“What does Thanksgiving mean?” asked Madam Waddle-Duck, wondering; “I don’t understand.”

“Ho, ho!” laughed the Turkey Gobbler in scorn — “where were you born? Every sensible Bird knows that Thanksgiving is the time when human beings eat all kinds of wonderful things — pies — and pudding — and — and — roast Ducks!” The Turkey laughed frightfully.

“Quack, Quack — Q-u-a-c-k —” said the poor trembling Duck.

And the old Turkey Gobbler stood by and mocked her fears.

“What is Thanksgiving?” asked Feather-top, the eldest Chick, wisely; “Mrs. Brown, the Farmer’s wife, was talking about it, too.”

“What was she saying?” asked his Mother.

Feather-top shook out his yellow down. He

felt so important because all the Barn Yard people were listening to his story.

"Well," he said, "she told Farmer Brown to hurry up and kill that Bird or it would never be roasted for Thanksgiving."

"Quack! quack!" "Cluck! cluck!" the Barn Yard rang with cries of terror.

"I am not afraid of being killed. I am so beautiful that every one wants me around," said the Turkey, and he proudly spread his tail and strutted out of the Yard.

There was a deep stillness in the Barn Yard as the anxious Birds awaited their doom. The trembling Chicks huddled near the Coop. The Ducklings crept close to their Mother, and Bantam Cocktail stood with his bit of a head held high waiting bravely for his death. And the silence grew deeper and deeper.

Crack! Bang! went the wooden Gate. The Farmer with his glittering ax was come at last! But behold! there in the Yard stood a big beautiful golden Pumpkin Pie who had stolen away from the other pies that stood in a row on the Kitchen Table.

Pumpkin Pie gazed around with great interest; he had never seen the Barn Yard before, but he had heard wonderful stories about it.

"It is certainly a very fine place," he remarked,

“but why are you so sad? Don't you know that to-morrow is Thanksgiving?” Very quietly Bantam Cocktail told him of their doom.

“We are waiting for Farmer Brown to come now,” he said; he spoke quite calmly.

“Listen.” Pumpkin Pie's golden face shone like the sun he was so pleased with what he had to say. “You need not be afraid any longer because — Farmer Brown — is — not coming! I passed him on the way here, and he had just killed the old Turkey Gobbler for the Thanksgiving Dinner.”

THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

WHO WILL BE THE DINNER?

SCENE: *The Barn Yard, bounded by an old picket fence. At the back, on the left, is an unpainted hencoop and Mrs. Cluck is seen peering anxiously from behind its bars. Madam Waddle-Duck, surrounded by her ducklings, is eating greedily from a big trough. Mr. Gobbler is strutting proudly around the Yard.*

MRS. CLUCK.

(In high anxious tones.)

Madam Waddles! Madam Waddles! Have you seen my babies anywhere?

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(Good naturedly.)

Why don't you bring up your Children to obey you? My young ones know how to behave.

MRS. CLUCK.

(Proudly.)

Ha! my little ones are so wide-awake and smart that they aren't content to stay in the Barn Yard

156 DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

only. They must see the World! (*Anxiously.*)
But this morning I bade them stay near the Coop,
for there is always a great fear in my heart until
this day is past.

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

Ducklings! Dinner is over. Play near the
fence for awhile and I will visit the Coop.

(*The six ducklings scatter, gazing through the
fence, as Madam Waddle-Duck slowly goes to the
hen-coop.*)

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

How now, Mrs. Cluck, why should you be
afraid? The sun is bright, the air in the Yard is
warm and our trough is always filled with the best
of food. No Barn Yard has a better Master
than our Farmer Brown.

MRS. CLUCK.

(*With fear.*)

Yes, yes, Farmer Brown is always good to us.
But haven't you noticed how *very, very*, generous
he has been for the past two weeks? The pans
and trough have been overflowing with such beau-
tiful hot corn and mush. It — is — that —
which makes me fear.



Mrs. Cluck

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(Amazed, shaking her head.)

Hens are strange birds! Here you are unhappy because you have all you want to eat. Now I should be miserable if I could not eat all the time.

MRS. CLUCK.

(With great meaning.)

You wouldn't if you knew what it meant at this time of the year. You see, you were only a duckling last November, yourself. But this is my fourth brood and — and — *(weeping)*. I know what Thanksgiving means in the Barn Yard.

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(Questioningly.)

Thanksgiving?

MR. GOBBLER.

(Proudly strutting by.)

Gobble, gobble, gobble! How now, old gossips! What news have you been spreading? Mrs. Cluck, you had better teach your Children to stay in the Yard. I met your whole family close to Farmer Brown's back door this morning. Mrs. Brown does not like chickens so near the house. She said so.



Mrs. Waddle-duck and Duckling

MRS. CLUCK.

(In trembling tones.)

Oh! Oh! tell me — were — they — near —
the — — — kitchen?

MR. GOBBLER.

(Chuckling maliciously.)

Feather-top was standing on the window-sill looking at the Pumpkin Pies, and Mrs. Brown scared her away with a broom.

MRS. CLUCK.

(Frantically.)

My Chick! My Chicks! Cluck! cluck! cluck!
Oh, where is Bantam Cocktail? He will call them
home!

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(Springing brightly into the group.)

Poor Mother Cluck! What is your trouble
now?

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(With disgust.)

Don't ask me! At first she was uphappy because she had too much to eat and now she is crying because her Children are not all tied to the Coop.



Bantam Cocktail

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(*Wisely.*)

She is a true mother. It is far safer for every one to stay at home at Thanksgiving time.

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(*Amazed.*)

Thanksgiving again! What does it mean?

MR. GOBBLER.

(*With scorn.*)

How old are you? Where did you live before you came to the Yard? Listen, I'll tell you what Thanksgiving is! It is a day made for human beings to be happy and they celebrate by having a feast. They eat apples — (*Madam Waddle-Duck listens with great interest*) and — nuts — and mashed potatoes — and pumpkin pies — and — (*with malice*) roast Ducks!

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(*With fear.*)

Quack! quack! qu-a-c-k! Children, don't stay too near the gate, there is nothing to see out there — Come to me!

MR. GOBBLER.

(Boastfully.)

You need not fear for your Children. They would be nothing but a mouthful of feathers. Now you — (*eying her*) stuffed with chestnuts would make a very nice dinner!

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(Weakly.)

Quack! quack! quack!

MRS. CLUCK.

(Coming to the aid of her friend.)

Be careful, Master Turkey, Ducks are not the only birds for a Thanksgiving feast. (*With meaning.*) What happened to your mother two years ago?

MR. GOBBLER.

(Crossly.)

I don't remember so far back! But I have no fear for myself — I am the most beautiful bird in the Barn Yard. Only a month ago I took the prize at the County Fair. Look at my tail. No Coop was large enough for me when I spread my feathers. Farmer Brown knows better than to waste me on the table!

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

Cock-a-doodle-doo! If you are not modest your head will grow as big as your tail, Master Gobbler!

MR. GOBBLER.

(Indignantly.)

Mind your own affairs, midgets. *You* could only make the gravy for the feast!

MRS. CLUCK.

(Interrupting pleadingly.)

Ah! Cocktail, go to the gate and call my babies!

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(Good-naturedly stands by the Gate. When he crows he raises himself on his toes and claps his wings.)

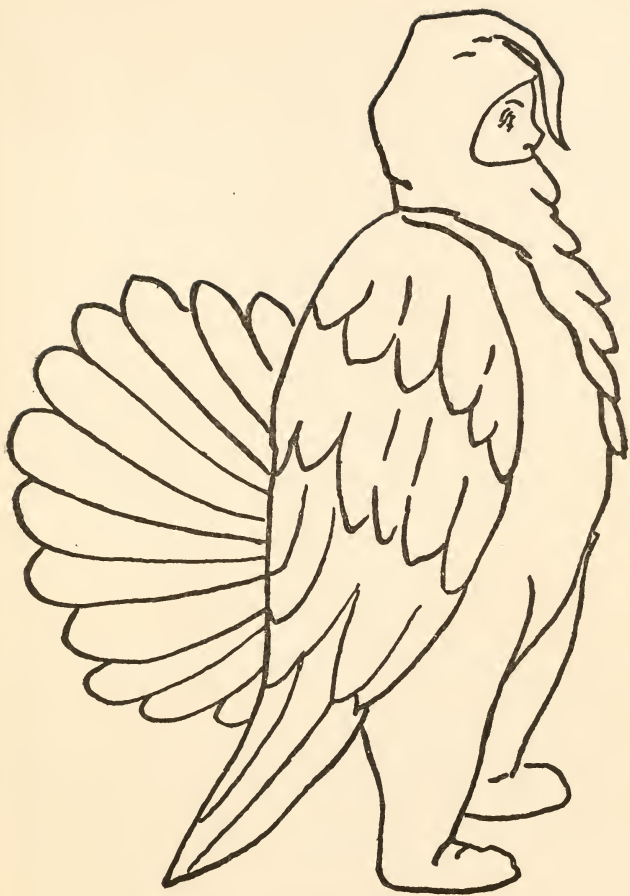
Cock-a-doodle-doo — *(louder)*. Cock-a-doodle-doo!

(Suddenly the six Chicks come scampering through the Gate, and gather around the Coop.)

MRS. CLUCK.

(In relieved tones.)

Never wander so far away, my babies. Where have you been?



Mr. Gobbler

FEATHER-TOP.

(Breathlessly, in quick little tones.)

Ah, we have seen such strange things. How wonderful the World is!

MRS. CLUCK.

(Anxiously.)

What did you see? Tell us —

MR. GOBBLER.

(With anger, standing aside from the group.)

Gather your Children around you, Mother Hen. Maybe it is the last Thanksgiving that you will all be together.

FEATHER-TOP.

(Excited.)

That was the word she said! That was the word she said!

MRS. CLUCK AND MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(Together.)

What word? What did she say? Who said it?

FEATHER-TOP.

It was Mrs. Brown who spoke. She was standing in the kitchen talking to the Farmer. Oh (*in*

dreamy tones), there were so many beautiful things on the table! There were rows of golden pumpkin pies and rosy apples, and snowy celery and —

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

We don't care what was on the table, tell us what Mrs. Brown said!

FEATHER-TOP.

(*Cheerily.*)

Oh, she only said that she wished Farmer Brown would kill that Bird because the oven was hot and the stuffing was all ready!

(*In fear and excitement the Barn Yard people begin to exclaim — at once — “quack, quack” — “gobble — gobble — gobble” — etc.*)

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(*Trying to speak cheerfully.*)

Well, friends, as Mrs. Brown said, “that bird,” it must mean that only one of us is to die. Let us all stay together until feeding time and then we shall know who is to be roasted for Thanksgiving.

MRS. CLUCK.

(*Meekly sighing.*)

Yes, let us stay together. Come close, my Children, let me hear your sweet peeping voices!

(The six Chicks begin to peep and the six Ducklings to quack as they huddle close to the Coop. Tableau.)

MR. GOBBLER.

Indeed, I will not stay with such a crowd of weak and silly birds. I will be off by myself. I think I will go to the house to see Farmer Brown. *(With a parting gleam of malice.)* Perhaps when I return I will tell you which is the one that Mrs. Brown is waiting for!

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(Calling after him.)

Cock-a-doodle-doo — Be careful that you don't meet Farmer Brown's ax.

(The Turkey struts out of the Yard, his "gobble, gobble," sounding fainter and fainter.)

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

(To Feather-Top.)

Did Mrs. Brown say anything more? Did — she — say — the — name — of — the — Bird?

FEATHER-TOP.

(Thoughtfully.)

No-o — she only showed the Farmer a big iron pan — it looked almost as big as our Coop, and —

MRS. CLUCK.

(Breathlessly.)

Yes?

FEATHER-TOP.

(Proud of the interest shown.)

And Farmer Brown said it made him hungry to look at it. Then he went out to get his ax and said he would return in a little while. *(Sadly.)* I did not hear any more because Mrs. Brown saw me and drove me away with a broom.

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(In sad, quiet tones.)

You heard enough, little one. *(To the others.)* Let us wait quietly. It is almost feeding time!

(There is a stillness in the Barn Yard as they mournfully await the terrible event. Suddenly a strange noise is heard in the distance. The Barn Yard folk are startled.)

MRS. CLUCK.

It's the Farmer!

MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

It's the Ax!

(Through the Gate appears Pumpkin Pie. He is dressed in gold with a big Jack-o'-lantern head.)

PUMPKIN PIE.

(With interest, looking around.)

So, this is the Barn Yard! I have often wondered what it was like. I never could get away before because I was always fastened to my vine and the cornfield was too far away. *(Bowling.)* I am glad to be here!

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(Gallantly.)

You are very welcome. But I fear the Barn Yard is not a very cheery place to visit to-day. *(With pride.)* It is usually the most interesting place on the Farm.

PUMPKIN PIE.

What is the matter with it to-day? *(Gazing around with interest.)* Something is wrong! Mrs. Cluck does look sad. This is a very strange time of the year for any one to be unhappy. Don't you know that to-morrow is Thanksgiving?

MRS. CLUCK AND MADAM WADDLE-DUCK.

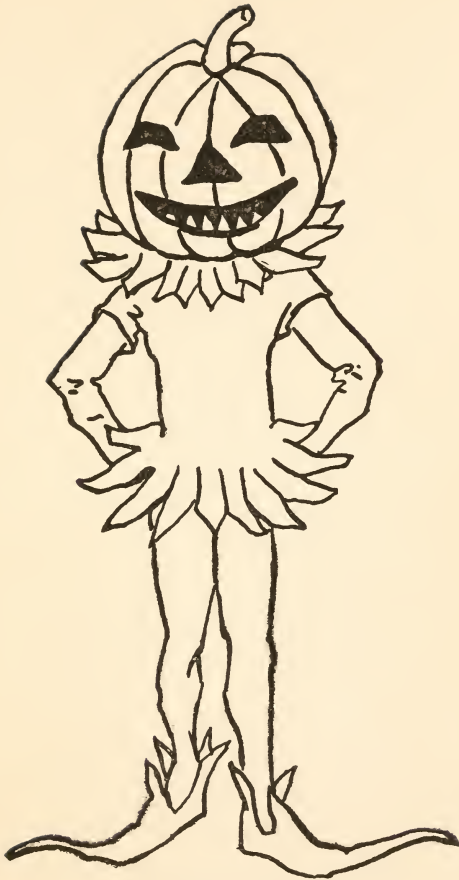
(In heart-broken tones.)

Yes! ah, yes!

BANTAM COCKTAIL.

(In explanation.)

Thanksgiving is never popular in the Barn



Pumpkin Pie Boy

Yard because — because — one — of — us must be — stuffed. (*Very sadly.*) We are waiting now for Farmer Brown to come.

PUMPKIN PIE.

But he is not coming to-night. I heard him say so. He said that you had enough food in the trough to last till morning. I passed him on my way here. He was very busy picking the tail feathers from the big Gobbler Turkey which he had just killed.

ALL THE BARN YARD FOLK.

(*In astonishment and joy.*)

Then Turkey was the Bird Mrs. Brown was waiting for after all!

(“*Quack! quack!*” “*Cluck!*” “*Peep! peep!*” “*Cock-a-doodle-doo!*” *the Barn Yard folk call out in gratefulness, as the curtain falls.*)

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

CHARACTERS

RITA.

HANS.

WANDERER.

WOMAN.

CHRISTMAS CHILD.

COSTUMES

HANS: Dark brown loose trousers, red flannel waist.
Red woolen stockings. Sabots.

In Act II he wears the same suit with gray cloak and sandals.

RITA: Plum-colored woolen dress, white lawn apron, kerchief, and coif, red woolen stockings.

In Act II she wears same dress with crimson hooded cape and mittens.

WANDERER: Leaf brown hooded cloak, worn sandals.
Whole appearance sad and neglected.

WOMAN: Pale gray robes with Madonna like folds.

CHRISTMAS CHILD: White Shepherd's slip — He is bare footed and holds a crook.

PROGRAM

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

PRESENTED BY

(NAME OF
CAST)

This is the story of —

HANS
and

RITA
who give of their simple fare to a worn old

WANDERER
on Christmas Eve. And it tells how they,
trudging through the snow, find helpless

A WOMAN
and her babe seeking refuge in an inn, and
last it tells how

THE CHRISTMAS CHILD
was waiting for them in the Forest beneath
the Christmas Evergreen.

THE STORY OF
THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

(To be told or read to the Cast.)

One Christmas Eve, Hans and Rita were busy in their little German kitchen. The fire blazed briskly on the hearth where the boy sat mending his wooden shoes. The sister bustled around making the poor room as spotless and dainty as only a good little German housewife could make it.

When their work was over the brother and sister sat at the table to eat their scant portion of porridge, for they were in a great haste to go to the Forest to cut down their Christmas tree, for although they had no toys nor goodies to hang on its boughs, yet they felt that it would not be a real Christmas if they did not have the faithful Evergreen to decorate their cottage on the morrow.

Suddenly there came a faint knocking; slowly the cottage door opened and an old bent woman came into the room. Her clothing was in tatters and on her bare feet were broken sandals.

“Dear Hans,” cried Rita, “lead our aged visitor to the hearth, while I heat our porridge. How glad I am that she came before we had eaten it!” And the generous child gave the Wanderer all their small meal.

“Look at her poor feet,” whispered Hans; “I will give her my shoes.” So he unfastened the worn sandals from the old woman’s feet and put on, in their place, his newly mended shoes, while Rita sweetly offered her their only staff to help her on her journey.

“May Christmas joys be here on Christmas Day,” said the Wanderer earnestly, and vanished from the cottage.

Then brother and sister wrapped themselves warmly in their hooded cloaks, and with ax and sled went out into the storm to cut their Tree.

The snow was falling fast and there was a stiff wind blowing. Hans’ feet in the worn sandals were numb with the cold and little Rita stumbled bravely through the freezing drifts without the aid of the staff, but they uttered no word of complaint and neither of them confessed that they were weary and faint for want of food.

Not far before them the Forest stood dark against the sky, and as they drew noiselessly from out its depths there came a young woman poorly clad, without cloak or hood to shield her from

the cold and in her arms she held a Child. "Give us help and shelter," she said, holding out her little Son.

"Alas," cried Rita, "it is a Child, with nothing on save a shirt! It will surely die on a night like this!" Quickly she folded her own warm cloak about the Child while Hans wrapped his heavy cape around the mother and giving her their sled to sell that she might buy shelter at the village inn, they turned again toward the Forest.

"May Christmas joys be yours on Christmas Day." The woman's voice sounded as clear and sweet as a bird's note and when they turned to look she was gone!

"How quietly she vanished!" exclaimed Rita. And then a very strange thing happened — the storm ceased, the snow stopped falling — the fierce wind died away, and the air was as warm and soft as a day in Spring — and in the skies a thousand stars were twinkling! And the boy and girl stood in the snow clad in nothing save their cottage clothes, as warm and comfortable as though they were by their own fireside.

But here comes the strangest part of the story! Listen — on the very edge of the Forest there stood a Fir Tree with branches glistening with gold and silver — with gems and gifts of all kinds. And among those gifts were two wonderful fur

coats — a new sled — a staff — and a fine pair of wooden shoes!

And behold! — beneath the glistening Tree with hands outstretched in welcome was the little Christmas Child.

The startled children stood speechless in wonder at the beautiful vision. They could scarcely believe it was true. But true it was, for they heard his clear voice call to them as He gently vanished — “Peace and good will to all on Christmas Day.” Then they were alone with those wonderful gifts — while all the Trees in the Forest, and the twinkling stars in the skies called to them, “Merry, Merry Christmas!”

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

ACT I

BROTHER AND SISTER

SCENE: *A cottage Kitchen in Germany. Hans sits before the log-fire mending his wooden shoes. Near by is a plain deal table with a single lighted candle. The room is poorly furnished but spotlessly clean. Rita stands on a high stool hanging the worn but freshly washed homespun curtains.*

RITA.

(Over her shoulder.)

How looks it, brother? Does my work seem fair?
At last 'tis finished! No home anywhere
In all our vale can any sweeter be!
Not the Count's Castle, nor the Rectory!

(Hans, still busy with his work, does not answer.)

RITA.

(Dejected.)

Why speak you not, dear Hans? 'Tis not well
done?

Alas! I've toiled so hard from rising sun,
 To make our home a joy on Christmas Day,
 And now you like it not!

HANS.

(Laying his work aside.)

Ah, weep not! Nay,
 Your little hands, dear child, have worked so well
 And decked our home with cheer; my eyes can tell
 How grand it is, even in all this gloom

(Gaily.)

'Tis like a Palace, not a cottage room!

(With arm about her.)

Now smile, and listen while I tell to you
 Why I so busy was! — See you, this shoe
 Was well nigh gone — and ere our light grows
 dim,
 My hands must make it strong once more, and
 trim,
 If you and I will to the Forest fare
 To choose our Christmas Tree that's growing
 there.

(Wistfully.)

For though we own no gifts or jewels bright
 To deck our home, let us on Christmas night





Hans

Have our hearth fair with Yule-tide boughs of
green.

RITA.

(Abashed.)

Forgive my temper! 'Twill no more be seen!

(Busily.)

In haste I'll heat the porridge. There is yet
A portion left to warm us. You may get
The ax and sled to carry home the Tree,
While I prepare our supper speedily.

*(Exit Hans — Rita busily heats, and pours into
the two waiting bowls, the evening porridge.
Hans enters with the sled and ax, which he places
by the kitchen door, then goes to the table.)*

RITA.

(Crossing to the window to draw the curtain.)

Alack! how chill it looks. The valley white
Lies like a sheet of snow this stormy night!
And far and black the Forest stands in gloom.

(Turning to her brother.)

Dear Hans, how blessed is our humble room
Safe from the cold, though scant and poor our
food.

HANS.

(Seating himself at the table.)

Though scant, I find the waiting bowl right good!
'Twill give us cheer and warm us as we go
Across the windy valley through the snow.

RITA.

(Seating herself beside him.)

How sweet it tastes!

(A faint knock is heard without.)

Ah, hush you! I did hear —

HANS.

Naught but the winter winds a-blowing near —

(The knock is repeated.)

RITA.

(Fearfully.)

Nay, 'tis no wind, upon our cottage door.
Some one is knocking. See, across the floor,
A shadow lies, from out the casement thrown.
'Tis bent, and aged. Let the door be thrown
Open in welcome to our ancient guest.

*(She stands wide-eyed, as Hans opens the door.
On the threshold there appears an old bent woman.
Her garments are in tatters and her feet are half-
shod in broken sandals.)*

HANS.

(Astonished.)

A beggar bent and wan, and poorly dressed!

(Helping her to a seat near the hearth.)

Here sit and warm yourself —

RITA.

(Sweetly, emptying her bowl of porridge into her brother's bowl, and offering it to her.)

'Twill give you cheer!

HANS.

*(As the wanderer rises from the hearth to leave.)*Oh, must you on your journey go? Then here,
Wear you my shoes. For they are new this day,*(He unfastens the worn sandals from the chilled feet and puts on them his strong shoes.)*

And take my staff to bear you on your way.

WANDERER.

*(At door, with upraised hand.)*May joy and health and happiness so bright
Be in this cottage room on Christmas Night.

RITA.

(Gazing at the closed door.)

Poor dame! She was so aged and so bent,



The Wanderer

My heart grows sad to know the way she went,
The winds so bitter are, and cold the snow.

HANS.

'Tis true indeed! Yet you, my child, must go
Out in the valley without strength or food.
I fear the cold will do you naught of good.

RITA.

(Bravely.)

I care not! I am young. She was so old
And needed all our fare, to face the cold.
I am glad 'twas ours to give.

(Suddenly.)

Dear Hans! but you
Will miss your loved staff. And ah — that shoe

(Holding out the beggar's torn sandal.)

Will never shield your feet from wet and snow.
Oh, let us wait till morn before we go;
Mayhap the storm will spend itself and we —

HANS.

(Astonished.)

Faith! wait till Christmas Morn to hew our tree?
Come, little faint heart, don your cloak and hood,
And let us hasten to the distant wood.

RITA.

(Wistfully, taking her cloak from the peg.)

If I showed fear, 'twas only fear for you.

HANS.

(With tenderness — taking her hand.)

Faith! 'Tis your heart that's ever strong and true.

And it is you that help me on my way —

And give the Christmas cheer on Christmas Day.

(Cloaked and hooded, they go to the door as the curtain falls.)

ACT II

THE CHRISTMAS CHILD

SCENE: *The road to the Forest. Hans and Rita are seen walking slowly through the snow. Hans draws a sturdy sled and carries an ax. Rita follows, beating her little red mittened hands for warmth.*

RITA.

(Merrily.)

Faith, it is cold! I scarce can see —
The winds do drive the snow so frantically.
Right glad am I my hood and cloak are warm.

HANS.

(Shivering.)

'Tis good to find some comfort in this storm.

(Looking at his sandaled feet.)

But glad am I that traveler weak and old
Wears stronger shoes than these to meet the cold.

RITA.

(Pointing before her.)

The way is not so far. My eyes can spy
The huge dense Forest, black against the sky.

(Excitedly.)

But look you, in our pathway do you see
A figure moving?

HANS.

Nay, it is a tree
Bent by the furious winds. Your eyes so bright
Are fain to wander such a stormy night.

*(As they speak a woman quietly comes across
the snow and in her arms she bears a child. They
are meanly clad and without cloak or hood.)*

WOMAN.

(Faintly holding out the sleeping babe.)

I pray you help me, in this bitter wind
I've traveled far and can no shelter find.

RITA.

(Distressed.)

Alack! It is a child! And on this night
She wears no cape to shield her — 'Tis but right,
Dear Hans, to give her ours —

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(Taking her own hooded cloak, she wraps it snugly around the baby, while Hans gently puts his cape about the shoulders of the mother.)

HANS.

There, poor dame,
Keep to the road, and go the way we came,
Which leads into the village. Find a bed
Within the Inn. For payment, sell our sled.
Take it, and draw your child, your strength is
gone —

RITA.

(Sweetly.)

We need it not —

WOMAN.

(With gratitude.)

On Christmas Morn
May joy and happiness be yours for aye —
Peace and good will to you on Christmas Day.

(She vanishes as noiselessly as she came.)

RITA.

(Bewildered.)

So swift she went! No footprint in the snow!
She made no sound but quietly did go.



The Woman

HANS.
(Dazed.)

'Tis very strange!

RITA.
(In great amazement.)

Oh, Hans, the storm is fled,
 The air is soft and mild, and overhead
 The stars are shining. I am warm, for lo!
 I feel no chill though cloakless in the snow!
 What does it mean?

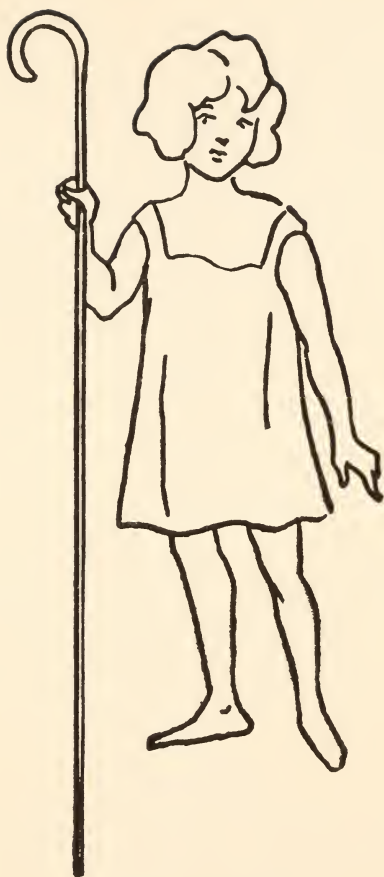
HANS.
(Slowly, wandering.)

'Tis warm —
 The air — is like — the Springtime — and — the
 storm
 Is vanished quite! Behold the Forest near
 Where we may fell our Tree and never fear
 Those Wintry blasts.

(Drawing close to her.)

Dear Child, this Christmas Night
 Is filled indeed with cheer and blessings bright.

*(As he speaks a dark curtain is drawn aside,
 which has protected one corner of the stage, and
 behold there stands an Evergreen shining with
 gold and silver, while on its topmost branch glis-*



Christmas Child

tens the Star of Bethlehem. Toys and wondrous gifts are hanging from its boughs. Plainly in view stands a sled and a fine new pair of wooden shoes, while two soft fur cloaks lie on the low branches.

With hands held out in welcome stands the Christmas Child, a little bare-foot boy in a snow-white shepherd's slip. In one hand he holds a crook. His looks are mild and beautiful. He stays for an instant, then gently vanishes.)

RITA.

Look! the Tree!

HANS.

(Kneeling in wonder.)

It glows so fair
With glittering gems and gifts and jewels rare!

(With hands outstretched.)

Oh, wondrous vision! fade not fast away!

RITA.

(With faith.)

Nay, 'tis a Christmas present, it will stay!
Those gifts which on its branches hang so bright,
Are given by the Christmas Child this night.

(Kneeling by the boy.)

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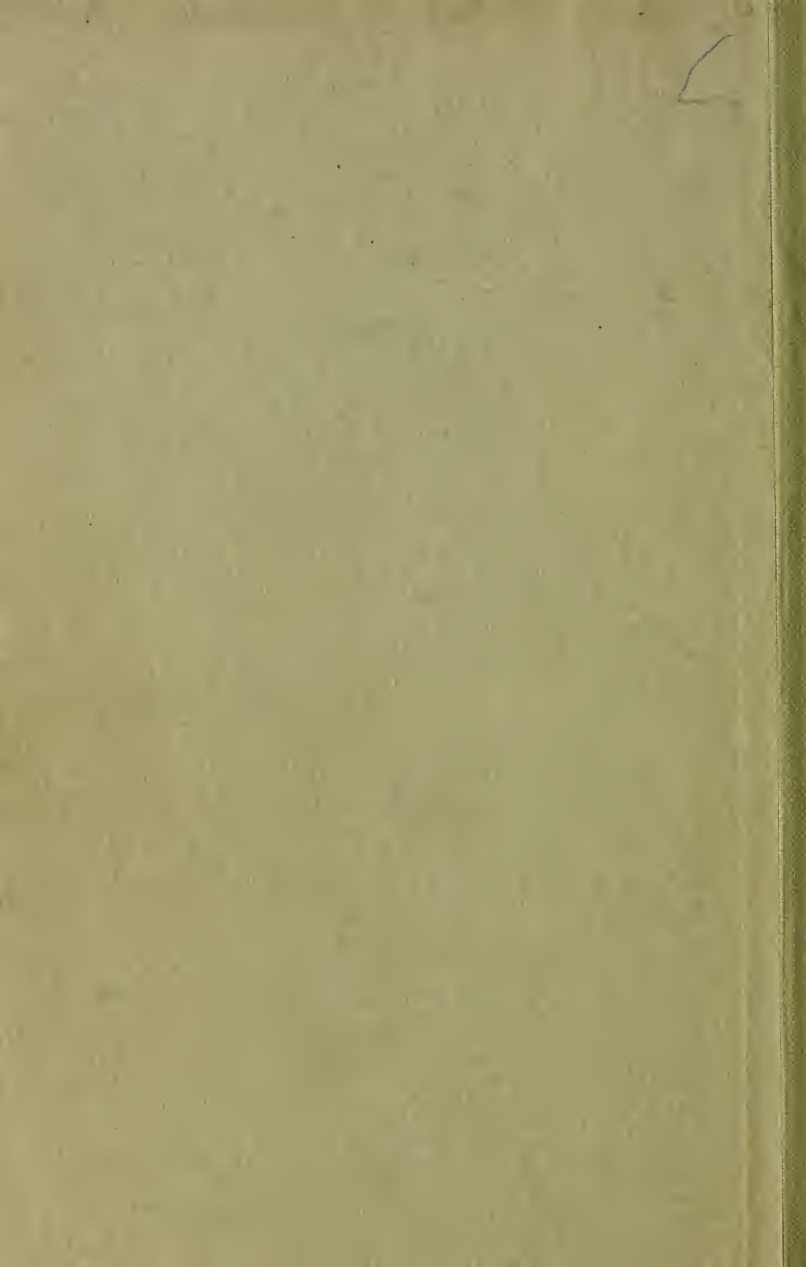
And saw you how He smiled? Around Him
shone

A golden radiance which outglowed the sun,
And as He vanished I did hear Him say,
Peace and good will to all on Christmas Day!

*(The curtain slowly falls as sweet unseen voices
sing "Holy Night," and the little boy and girl
kneel in silent prayer.)*

THE END

CENTRAL COLLECTION
CHILDREN'S ROOM



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